



Helping Yourself and Others After Disaster

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Helping Yourself

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Recovering from a traumatic experience like a disaster can often be a gradual and ongoing process. It may take longer than you had hoped or expected, but there are certain tips and procedures that can make a difference in your recovery journey.

- If it triggers negative emotions, avoid news coverage or social media commentary of the event.
- Accept that your feelings and emotions are a necessary part of the healing process.
- Don't judge yourself for your reactions.
- Don't be in a hurry. Let the healing process run its course.
- Avoid stressful situations.
- When you feel you're up to it, take small but positive steps back into your familiar routine.
- If you feel it will help, connect with others who shared your experience.
- Avoid excessive use of drugs and alcohol.
- Focus on self-care. Try to get adequate amounts of rest, exercise, and nutrition.



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There may be a desire to take the recovery journey alone to prove that you are strong enough to do so. But seeking help from those closest to you can be its own sign of strength. Lean on people you trust. Share your feelings with them. You may even find comfort in an organized support group.

In the first week or two after the event, you may experience a range of physical and emotional responses or symptoms related to trauma. These symptoms may include breathing difficulties, change in appetite, disrupted sleep, lack of focus, anger, fear, guilt, emotional numbness, and feelings of isolation and abandonment.

These symptoms are not things to be hidden or ignored. They are normal responses to abnormal events.

As time goes on, the symptoms often diminish. But if you feel you are not making progress, if you feel your symptoms are interfering with your ability to manage your daily life, or you find yourself overindulging in drugs or alcohol, you may be suffering from Complicated/Traumatic Grief or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In these cases, seeking help from a mental health professional is an advisable course of action.



Helping Others

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a way you can provide support and assistance to those who were involved in or witnessed the event.

Given that disaster survivors often experience an extensive range of physical, psychological, behavioral, and spiritual reactions, Psychological First Aid is designed to reduce the initial stress and then help develop effective coping skills.



Critical support when you need it

Visit optumeap.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.



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