



It is common for people to experience very strong emotional reactions with the arrival of a hurricane and its accompanying damage to homes and community infrastructures. If you are experiencing distress in the wake of the recent hurricanes, you are not alone. Understanding common responses to extreme events can help you to cope effectively with your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Putting into practice some of the tips in this guide can help you along the path to managing the storm's aftermath and feeling better. There are a number of steps you can take to help restore emotional well-being and a sense of control in the wake of the hurricane or other traumatic experience, including the following:

- **Recognize that this is a challenging time but one that you can work to manage.** You've tackled hardships at other times in your life. Tap into the skills you used to get through past challenges.
- **Allow yourself to mourn the losses you have experienced.** Recognize that you may experience a variety of emotions and their intensity will likely less over time.
- **Take a news break.** Watching replays of footage from the hurricane can make your stress even greater. Often, the media tries to interest viewers by presenting worst case scenarios. These may not be representative of your home or community.
- **Ask for support** from people who care about you and who will listen and empathize with your situation. But keep in mind that your typical support system may be weakened if those who are close to you also have experienced or witnessed the hurricane.
- **Find ways to express yourself when ready.** Communicating your experience through talking with family or close friends, keeping a diary, or other forms of self-expression may be a source of comfort. Find out about local support groups led by appropriately trained and experienced professionals. Support groups are often available in communities following large-scale disasters. People can experience relief and comfort connecting with other hurricane survivors who have had similar reactions and emotions. These can be especially helpful for people with limited personal support systems.
- **Engage in healthy behaviors to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress.** Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest. If you experience difficulties sleeping, you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques. Avoid alcohol and drugs since these can increase a sense of depression and/or impede you from doing what is necessary to be resilient and cope with events.
- **Establish or reestablish routines** such as eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. Take some time off from the demands of daily life by pursuing hobbies or other enjoyable activities.
- If possible, **avoid major life decisions** such as switching jobs because these activities tend to be highly stressful.

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