

# Coping with Stress and Taking Care of Yourself in the Aftermath of a Hurricane

## Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Hurricanes & Other Natural Disasters

- No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
- It is normal to feel anxious about you and your family's safety.
- Profound sadness, grief and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Focusing on strengths and abilities will help you to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.

## Signs that Adults Need Stress Management Assistance

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Limited attention span or difficulty concentrating
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood swings
- Crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

## Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings, even though it may be difficult.
- Don't hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated if you cannot help directly in the recovery work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life patterns or by adjusting them.

This healthy outlook will help yourself and your family. (i.e. healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, meditation.)

- Maintain a normal household and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities of yourself and your family.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials, rituals and use of symbols as a way to express feelings.
- Use existing supports groups of family, friends, and church.
- Establish a family emergency plan. Knowing that you have a plan in the event of a future disaster can be very comforting.

*Source: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

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