

Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and Disaster

Facts:

- ☞ Stress is a *common, normal, and necessary* response to many situations
- ☞ What may cause you to feel stress may not have the same effect on someone else
- ☞ You may feel badly immediately after a disaster or much later
- ☞ Strong feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation!

Symptoms of stress that you may experience after a disaster:

Body	Mind	Feelings	Actions
☞ Pain (stomach, chest, head, face)	☞ Confusion	☞ Anxious	☞ Angry outbursts
☞ Difficulty breathing	☞ Nightmares	☞ Afraid	☞ Withdrawing
☞ Tiredness	☞ Feeling extra alert	☞ Guilty	☞ Crying
☞ Upset stomach	☞ Poor concentration	☞ Grief	☞ Yelling
☞ Dizziness	☞ Memory problems	☞ Sad	☞ Eating more or less
☞ Sweating	☞ Trouble solving problems	☞ Irritable	☞ Pacing
☞ Fast heart beat	☞ Thinking about past traumas	☞ Depressed	☞ Trouble sleeping
☞ Blurry vision		☞ Overwhelmed	☞ Avoiding people, places, or memories
☞ Aches and pains			

What can you do?

Here are some tips that many people find useful. Find out what works best for you.

- ☞ Eat and sleep as well as you can. A regular schedule is very important.
- ☞ Keep your body active. You could try walking or doing chores once it is safe.
- ☞ Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and drugs.
- ☞ Spend time with family and friends.
- ☞ Speak with a spiritual leader.
- ☞ Help someone else.
- ☞ Talk about the event as much or as little as you want, when **you** are ready.
- ☞ Practice relaxing in short sessions. Some relaxing activities are:
 - Sit with your eyes closed and breathe slowly in through your nose, out through your mouth.
 - Tighten your muscles for a few seconds then relax them (first your legs, then your hands and arms, then your shoulders, then your face).
 - Imagine yourself somewhere safe, calm, and quiet.
- ☞ Do something that is fun—even after a disaster you can sing, dance, tell stories, hug a child, or just smile.
- ☞ Once resources become available again, your doctor might also have helpful suggestions or medication.