

After a Disaster: Self-Care Strategies



People have different reactions to demanding or stressful events. Responses to an event can depend on factors such as:

- How physically or psychologically close you were to the event.
- Your level of responsibility during the event.
- Your current life situation.
- Your previous experience with personal crisis.
- The availability of support from friends, family, and coworkers.

Usual responses to a traumatic event:

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL
Nausea or upset stomach	Continued thoughts and images of the event	Anxiety, fear, and worry
Changes in appetite	Fearful thoughts	Sadness, withdrawal
Headaches or muscle aches	Difficulty concentrating	Grief, feelings of helplessness
Difficulty sleeping	Distressing dreams	Anger and irritability
Fatigue	Feeling “dazed” or disoriented	Numbness

These responses are usually temporary. You can help yourself cope with these reactions through self-care. Self-care can enhance your emotional energy and help you begin to return your life to somewhat of a normal state.

Self-care tips:

- Remember that your reactions are normal. Give yourself permission to recover at your own pace.
- Talk or write about the event or your reactions.
- Nurture yourself. Get plenty of rest, eat healthy meals, take a hot bath, listen to relaxing music, etc.
- Lower expectations of what you “should be doing.”
- Spend time with supportive people.
- Practice stress reduction techniques like deep breathing, meditation, progressive relaxation, etc.
- Keep as much of your regular schedule as possible.
- Stay away from mood altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.
- Focus on the things that you do have control over.

If you have further questions or concerns, please consult with a health care professional.

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