

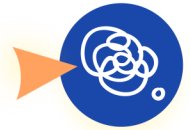
## RECOGNIZING SIGNS

# TRAUMA

When we experience trauma, it is helpful to remember that we are under extreme stress. Because of the trauma and stress, our brain puts us into survival mode (fight-flight), which helps keep us alive but can impair our ability to recognize the signs of trauma and recover.



Most people experience powerful emotional and physical responses immediately after the traumatic event, and in many cases, for months afterward.



The initial and long-term signs of trauma after a natural disaster can differ based on the events and experiences of the individual. We've included some immediate and long-term signs of trauma, below, to help you recognize them.



### Immediate Signs of Trauma (< 3 months after event)

- Feeling numb or like nothing is real
- Problems focusing or feeling confused
- Easily startled or scared
- Intense anger or sadness
- Heart racing when thinking about the event
- Difficulty sleeping or having nightmares about the disaster
- Headaches and/or fatigue
- Feeling worried or fearful
- Digestive problems, like upset stomach

### Long-term Signs of Trauma (> 3 months after event)

- Feeling irritable or bitter
- Difficulty thinking or making decisions
- Socially isolating from family or friends
- Avoiding places that bring back painful memories of the event
- Easily startled or scared by certain sights or sounds
- Problems completing work tasks
- Recurrent thoughts about the disaster or future disasters
- Difficulty sleeping, unable to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Fatigue
- Worrying more or fearful about future disasters
- Intense grief for weeks and months

For more resources or to  
talk with a crisis specialist:



Source: Paul Norrod, DrPH, RN, Extension Specialist for Rural Health and Farm Safety  
Laura Weddle, Extension Specialist for Farm Stress and Rural Mental Health

References:  
National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2006). Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide 2nd Edition. Rockville, MD: National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2022). Coping Tips for Traumatic Events and Disasters. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/coping-tips>

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.