



TRAUMA

During recovery efforts after a natural disaster, it is important to recognize how to cope with the events. By learning how to cope with the trauma, we can grow stronger as individuals and communities. The growth will help us remain healthy and well, but also help each other when future natural disasters might occur.

Coping with trauma can sound difficult when trying to recover from a natural disaster, especially if we feel helpless or hopeless. Several tips below can help you, your friends, family, and the community handle trauma and the stress brought on by the natural disaster. As you consider the tips below, remember that recovery is possible!

Prioritize Basic Needs

- Food: undamaged, nonperishable or food provided during relief efforts.
- Safety: avoid running water, damaged structures, or downed power lines. Minimize exposure to flood waters. Avoid going out after curfew or at night to prevent exposure to hazards like downed power lines.
- Water: bottled water or other prepackaged juices or sodas.
- Clothing: if possible, obtain or keep a set of dry clothes, including socks and a jacket or coat.
- Shelter: take shelter in an undamaged/unaffected structure like a school, church, or mobile shelter.

Care for Others, Care for Yourself

- Use compassion and caring dealing with others.
- Offer supportive words to yourself and others.
- Spend time or reach out to family and friends daily.
- Avoid the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Reduce/avoid consumption of news.
- Delay making major life decisions.
- Acknowledge your emotions; one day, you may feel angry, then feel overwhelmed or sad.
- Give yourself grace. Feeling sad, worried, and angry is OK.
- Try to get “good” sleep.
- Remain flexible. Changes will occur.
- Seek professional support from a physician or counselor.

Restore Your Routine

- Eat at the same time each day.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Take time for rest to boost your recovery.
- If possible, take your medicines.
- Take time to grieve.
- Call, text, or talk to someone you trust daily. Talk with volunteer or safety personnel if you cannot connect with a friend or family member.
- Once out of danger and you are safe, wake up and go to bed each day at the same times.

For more resources or to talk with a crisis specialist:



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

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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>

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