

Common Reactions to Disasters



After a traumatic event, it is normal to have feelings you may not have felt before. You may have strong feelings straight away, or you may not notice a change until the crisis is over. It will take time for you to feel better and your life to return to normal.

These feelings can affect how you feel, how you act and how you think.

How you feel

- Fear of it happening again
- Shock, not really believing what happened
- Anger at the unfairness, why me?
- Sadness for what you have lost
- Shame that you may not have behaved as well as you could

How you act

- Not interested in, or able to enjoy things you used to
- Not wanting to be with friends or talk to people
- Drinking more alcohol than usual, smoking more
- Finding it hard to sleep, feeling tired
- Not wanting to eat, or eating more than usual

How you think

- Remembering what happened again and again
- Having unpleasant dreams, nightmares
- Finding it hard to make decisions
- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Having problems remembering things not related to the event

These steps may help you feel better. Try to:

- Follow your normal routine as much as possible, go to work, exercise and stay active
- Accept help from others and if you are able, offer to help others in your community yourself
- Try not to dwell on the event by reading, listening to or watching reports on TV, radio and newspapers



Sometimes the feelings can be too much to handle alone – ask for help if you:

Have no one to talk to about what happened

Are not able to take care of yourself or your children

Have accidents or feel ill

Feel sad or depressed for more than two weeks

Rely on alcohol or drugs to cope

Continue to have nightmares, poor sleep or flashbacks

Find it hard to be with others, your relationships are suffering

Think about suicide