

# Coping After a Disaster

People who have gone through a disaster can experience significant stress. This is a common and normal response. Symptoms may develop up to 3 years following the disaster. If left untreated, conditions such as anxiety and depression can develop.



## SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR:

- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Depression
- Domestic violence
- Grief
- Suicidal thoughts/behaviors
- Difficulty remembering key parts of the event
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feelings of guilt/blame
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest in enjoyable activities
- Feeling tense/"on edge"
- Angry outbursts
- Avoiding reminders of the event

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU/OTHERS ARE FEELING:

Your emotions can change before, during and after a disaster, and they can change frequently — this is normal.

### WHAT YOU MAY FEEL:

- **Worry or Anxiety**  
before a disaster and about your future
- **Anger or Sadness**  
during anniversaries or events that remind you of the disaster
- **Happiness**  
as you stand together with your community
- **Guilt**  
because you did not experience the same thing as others

### WHAT TO DO:

Anyone can experience mental health effects from a disaster. Seeking help early reduces the risk of developing a long-term problem.



**Stay connected and don't isolate: Interacting with others is critical to healing**

- Talk to family and friends
- Meet new/different neighbors
- Join a club/community group



**Dial 2-1-1 to reach the United Way Helpline, and ask for a referral to non-profit counseling services or log on to [UnitedWayHouston.org](https://www.unitedwayhouston.org)**



**Hotlines for immediate help:**

- The Harris Center for Mental Health & IDD
- 24-hour Crisis Line: **713-970-7000**
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: **800-273-8255**
- The Disaster Distress Helpline: **1.800.985.5990**



### NOTE:

- Speak to your primary care physician and / or health care provider
- If you are employed with benefits, ask about an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAPs pay for short-term confidential counseling.