



Coping with Traumatic Events

Traumatic events, such as a national tragedy or personal loss, can trigger feelings of anxiety, sorrow and concern about the future. Both the event itself and even just a person’s memory of it may cause these feeling to interfere with daily functions at home, work or school. Emergency responders, medical professionals, educators and all Louisianans should know how to recognize when they or someone else is having difficulty coping with a traumatic experience, no matter how recent, and how to get help.

Strong feelings are expected.

Each person reacts to traumatic events differently, both emotionally and physically. While it is typical to react to a stressful event with increased anxiety, worry and anger, most people bounce back. However, some individuals may have more trouble recovering than others, and there are ways you can help both yourself and others recover more easily.

Take care of yourself.

Manage and alleviate your stress by taking care of yourself. Eat right, get enough sleep, avoid alcohol and drugs and exercise.

Connect with friends and family.

Check in with family members and friends to find out how they are coping and share your own feelings as well. Feeling stressed, sad or upset are common reactions to life-changing events. Pay attention to early warning signs of more serious distress and seek help if they occur.

Take care of your children.

Children also have reactions to traumatic events and may feel fearful, angry, sad, worried or confused after. They will benefit from talking about their feelings on their own level

and getting reassurance from an adult. Let your children know that you will all be OK and get through things together.

Signs that more help may be needed:

For some people, experiencing trauma will be more difficult. They may develop depression, experience grief or anger, turn to alcohol or drugs or even think about hurting themselves or others. The signs of serious problems include:

- ▶ excessive worry;
- ▶ crying frequently;
- ▶ becoming more irritable, angry, and argumentative;
- ▶ wanting to be alone most of the time;
- ▶ feeling anxious, fearful, overwhelmed by sadness, or confused;
- ▶ having trouble thinking clearly, concentrating, or making decisions;
- ▶ using more alcohol and/or other substances;
- ▶ experiencing more physical aches and pains, including headaches; and
- ▶ having trouble with “nerves.”

If these signs and symptoms persist and interfere with daily functioning, it is important to seek help.

Where to find help:

If you or others you care about are experiencing difficulty recovering from trauma, there is help. Talk to your health care provider or call one of the helplines below. They can provide services and referrals to local resources in your community that can help you and your loved ones.

Office of Behavioral Health Crisis line

(866) 310-7977

Louisiana Alcohol and Substance Use Helpline

(877) 664-2248

National Disaster Distress Helpline

(800) 985-5990 or

Text TalkWithUs to 66746

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-TALK (8255)

Always call 9-1-1 in emergencies

Where to learn more :

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

www.dhh.la.gov/BePrepared

Katrina 10: Resilient New Orleans

http://www.nola.gov/getattachment/Health/Katrina-Healthy-Tips_FINAL.pdf

Human Services Districts and Authorities

<http://dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/category/145>

CDC Division of Violence Prevention

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/coping_with_stress_tips.html

SAMHSA Disaster Distress

www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org/helpcenter/disaster/index.aspx

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/

