

# **Caring for Your Congregation and Community During Crisis: A Free Live Webinar Series for Leaders**

## **Where are We? The Spiritual and Emotional Phases of the COVID-19 Disaster October 6, 2020**

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Crisis Care Ministries**

### ***Material for General Distribution In this Packet***

**Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks** **Pages 2 - 5**  
(SAMHSA— Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>

**Coping With Stress** **Pages 6 - 12**  
(CDC— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html#stressful>

**Recovering From Disasters** **Pages 13 - 16**  
(SAMHSA— Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters>

**Coping With Anger After A Disaster or Other Traumatic Event** **Pages 17 - 20**  
(SAMHSA— Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/disaster-survivors/coping-anger-after-disaster>

**Taking Care of Your Emotional Health** **Page 21**  
(CDC— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)  
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>



# Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

## What You Should Know

When you hear, read, or watch news about an outbreak of an infectious disease such as Ebola, you may feel anxious and show signs of stress—even when the outbreak affects people far from where you live and you are at low or no risk of getting sick. These signs of stress are normal, and may be more likely or pronounced in people with loved ones in parts of the world affected by the outbreak. In the wake of an infectious disease outbreak, monitor your own physical and mental health. Know the signs of stress in yourself and your loved ones. Know how to relieve stress, and know when to get help.

## Know the Signs of Stress

What follows are behavioral, physical, emotional, and cognitive responses that are all common signs of anxiety and stress. You may notice some of them after you learn about an infectious disease outbreak.

### YOUR BEHAVIOR:

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in your alcohol, tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs
- An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Crying frequently
- Worrying excessively
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun

### Know When To Get Help

You may experience serious distress when you hear about an infectious disease outbreak, even if you are at little or no risk of getting sick. If you or someone you know shows signs of stress (see list at left) for several days or weeks, get help by accessing one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet. Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline right away if you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him- or herself or someone else, or talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide.



### YOUR BODY:

- Having stomachaches or diarrhea
- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or eating too much
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches
- Being easily startled

### YOUR EMOTIONS:

- Being anxious or fearful
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling angry
- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness

### YOUR THINKING:

- Having trouble remembering things
- Feeling confused
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Having difficulty making decisions

## Know How To Relieve Stress

You can manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.

### KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE:

Set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching news about the outbreak. You will want to stay up to date on news of the outbreak, particularly if you have loved ones in places where many people have gotten sick. But make sure to take time away from the news to focus on things in your life that are going well and that you can control.

### GET THE FACTS:

Find people and resources you can depend on for accurate health information. Learn from them about the outbreak and how you can protect yourself against illness, if you are at risk. You may turn to your family doctor, a state or local health department, U.S. government agencies, or an international organization. Check out the sidebar on the next page for links to good sources of information about infectious disease outbreaks.

### KEEP YOURSELF HEALTHY:

- Eat healthy foods, and drink water.
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Get physical exercise.

## USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO RELAX:

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, wash your face and hands, or engage in pleasurable hobbies.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task.
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, or talk to family.
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often.



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Take care of your physical health to help lower your stress. Take a break to focus on positive parts of your life, like connections with loved ones.

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## PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY, FEELINGS, AND SPIRIT:

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of thinking and feeling about this event, and think of how you handled your thoughts, emotions, and behavior around past events.
- Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common after an event like an infectious disease outbreak, even when it does not directly threaten you.
- Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings about the outbreak, share reliable health information, and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak, to remind yourself of the many important and positive things in your lives.
- Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer, or helping others in need.

## Sources for Credible Outbreak-Related Health Information

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027  
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)  
<https://www.cdc.gov>

### World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization  
525 23rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-974-3000  
<http://www.who.int/en>

## Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
(SAMHSA)

5600 Fishers Lane

Rockville, MD 20857

Toll-Free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

Email: info@samhsa.hhs.gov

SAMHSA Store: https://store.samhsa.gov

### ***SAMHSA Hotlines***

#### **SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline**

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablamos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website in English: https://

www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

Website in Spanish: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/  
disaster-distress-helpline/espanol

#### **SAMHSA's National Helpline**

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral

Information Service in English and español)

Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-  
helpline

#### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)

Website in English: https://

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Website in Spanish: https://

suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol

### ***Treatment Locator***

#### **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator**

Website: https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home

### ***SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center***

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac

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*\*Note: Inclusion of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## Coping with Stress

Updated July 1, 2020

[Print](#)

### Pandemics can be stressful

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. However, these actions are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19. **Coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.**

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can sometimes cause the following:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.
- Increased use of [tobacco](#), and/or [alcohol and other substances](#).





## Take care of your mental health

You may experience [increased stress](#) during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

### Get immediate help in a crisis

- Call 911
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746. Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico can text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) .
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Chat](#) [↗](#)
- [The Eldercare Locator](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-677-1116 [TTY Instructions](#) [↗](#)
- [Veteran's Crisis Line](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) or text: 8388255

### Find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health

- [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-662-HELP (4357) and TTY 1-800-487-4889
- [Treatment Services Locator Website](#) [↗](#)
- [Interactive Map of Selected Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) [↗](#)

## Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations

How you respond to stress during the COVID-19 pandemic can depend on your background, your social support from family or friends, your financial situation, your health and emotional background, the community you live in, and many other factors. The changes that can happen because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways we try to contain the spread of the virus can affect anyone.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- People who are [at higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19 (for example, older people, and people of any age with certain [underlying medical conditions](#)).
- [Children](#) and [teens](#).
- People [caring for family members or loved ones](#).
- Frontline workers such as [health care providers and first responders](#),
- Essential workers who work in the [food industry](#).
- People who have existing [mental health conditions](#).
- People who use [substances](#) or have a substance use disorder.
- People who have lost their jobs, had their work hours reduced, or had other major changes to their employment.
- [People who have disabilities](#) or developmental delay.
- People who are [socially isolated](#) from others, including people who live alone, and people in rural or frontier areas.
- People in some [racial and ethnic minority groups](#).
- People who do not have access to information in their primary language.
- People experiencing [homelessness](#).
- People who live in [congregate \(group\) settings](#).


## Take care of yourself and your community

Taking care of your friends and your family can be a stress reliever, but it should be balanced with care for yourself. [Helping others cope with their stress](#), such as by providing social support, can also make your community stronger. During times of increased social distancing, people can still maintain social connections and care for their mental health. Phone calls or video chats can help you and your loved ones feel socially connected, less lonely, or isolated.

## Healthy ways to cope with stress

- **Know [what to do if you are sick](#) and are concerned about COVID-19.** Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- **Know where and how to get treatment** and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy (in person or through telehealth services).
- **Take care of your emotional health.** [Taking care of your emotional health](#) will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.
- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.**



- Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#)  .
- [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.](#)
- [Exercise regularly.](#)
- [Get plenty of sleep.](#)
- Avoid excessive [alcohol and drug use.](#)
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.** While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

## Know the facts to help reduce stress

Knowing the facts about COVID-19 and [stopping the spread of rumors](#) can help reduce stress and [stigma](#). Understanding the risk to yourself and people you care about can help you connect with others and make an outbreak less stressful.


## Take care of your mental health











[Mental health](#) is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It may also affect how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices during an emergency.

People with pre-existing mental health conditions or substance use disorders may be particularly vulnerable in an emergency. [Mental health conditions](#) (such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia) affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior in a way that influences their ability to relate to others and function each day. These conditions may be situational (short-term) or long-lasting (chronic). People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. If you think you have new or worse symptoms, call your healthcare provider.




**Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way** of your daily activities for several days in a row. Free and confidential [resources](#) can also help you or a loved one connect with a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

### Get immediate help in a crisis

- Call 911
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)  : 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746. Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico can text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663.

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#)  .
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)  : 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#)  : 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#)  : 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Chat](#) 
- [The Eldercare Locator](#)  : 1-800-677-1116 [TTY Instructions](#) 
- [Veteran's Crisis Line](#)  : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#)  or text: 8388255

## Find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health

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- [Treatment Services Locator Website](#) 
- [Interactive Map of Selected Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) 






## Suicide

Different life experiences affect a person's risk for suicide. For example, suicide risk is higher among people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence. Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, and other emotional or financial stresses are known to raise the risk for suicide. People may be more likely to experience these feelings during a crisis like a pandemic.

However, there are ways to protect against suicidal thoughts and behaviors. For example, support from family and community, or feeling connected, and having access to in-person or virtual counseling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more about CDC's work in [suicide prevention](#).

### Other Resources:

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#)  .
- [SAMHSA Suicide Prevention](#) 
- [Suicide Risk Factors and Warning Signs](#) 
- [Five Action Steps for Communicating with Someone Who May Be Suicidal](#) 

## Recovering from COVID-19 or ending home isolation

It can be stressful to be separated from others if you have or were exposed to COVID-19. Each person ending a period of home isolation may feel differently about it.




Emotional reactions may include:

- Mixed emotions, including relief.
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Stress from the experience of having COVID-19 and monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others.
- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have fears of getting the disease from you, even though you are cleared to be around others.
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties while you had COVID-19.
- Worry about getting re-infected or sick again even though you've already had COVID-19.
- Other emotional or mental health changes.





[Children may also feel upset](#) or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has COVID-19, even if they are now better and able to be around others again.

## Resources



### For Everyone

- [How Right Now](#) 
- [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)
- [HHS ASPR TRACIE COVID-19 Behavioral Health Resources](#) 
- [Coronavirus Tax Relief and Economic Impact Payments](#) 

### For Communities

- [Coping with Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)  
- [Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)  


### For Families and Children

- [Helping Children Cope during an COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Coping After a Disaster](#)  – A Ready Wrigley activity book for children age 3-10
- [Teen Depression](#) 

### For People at Higher Risk for Serious Illness

- [Serious Illness Care Program COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#) 

### For Healthcare Workers and First Responders

- [Healthcare Personnel and First Responders: How to Cope with Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Emergency Responders: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself](#)
- [Disaster Technical Assistance Center](#)  (SAMHSA)

### For Other Workers

- [Employees: How to Cope with Job Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Last Updated July 1, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)

**DTAC**[About DTAC](#)[CCP](#)[CCP Toolkit](#)**Recovering From Disasters**[Phases of Disaster](#)[Disaster Planners](#)[Disaster Survivors](#)[Disaster Responders](#)[Disaster Behavioral Health Resources](#)[DBHIS Collections](#)[Online Training](#)[Webinars and Podcasts](#)[Past Volumes of The Dialogue](#)

## Recovering From Disasters



The 2017 hurricane season has produced a record-breaking number of massive storms that led to severe flooding and damages across the United States and the Caribbean. A widely publicized mass shooting in Nevada and wildfires in the western United States have also recently occurred. Recovery efforts in these areas are ongoing. This webpage contains information and resources to help during the recovery process in the aftermath of disasters.

### Disaster Reactions

Disasters, both natural and human-caused, affect people and communities in different ways. As you begin to rebuild and recover, remember that it is very common for disaster survivors to have reactions to their experiences. Disaster survivors may show physical and emotional signs of stress, and disasters may affect them financially. Sadness, grief, and anger are just some of the common emotions survivors may experience. Reactions to the disaster may occur not only in people with direct experience of a disaster, but also in those who were indirectly affected through repeated exposure to media coverage of the incident.

Most disaster survivors are resilient and will recover with no additional assistance. However, some people may need a little extra help during the recovery process. Certain groups or populations may be at greater risk for developing severe reactions to a disaster or traumatic event. For more information or additional help in recovering, visit the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline's [webpage on warning signs and risk factors for emotional distress](#).

### Phases of Disaster

While each survivor experiences a disaster as an individual, he or she also experiences it as part of a community. This [webpage](#) illustrates a community's response to disasters.

Disaster Distress  
Helpline

1-800-985-5990

**Contact Us**

For disaster technical assistance inquiries, contact SAMHSA DTAC at 800-308-3515 or [dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov)

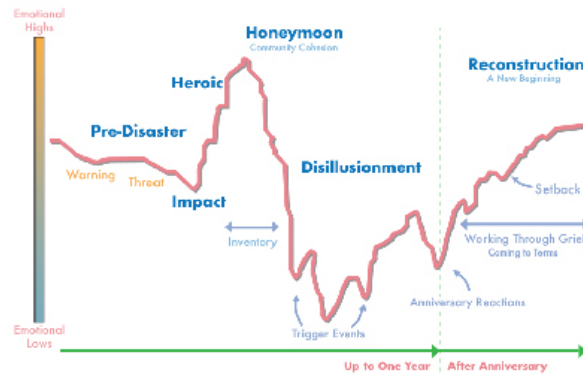
For people experiencing emotional distress related to a disaster, SAMHSA offers toll-free crisis counseling and support through the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#), 1-800-985-5990.

[Contact SAMHSA](#)

**DTAC Bulletins and Newsletters**

- » [The Dialogue](#): A quarterly newsletter for disaster behavioral health professionals.
- » [SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin](#): A monthly e-newsletter with resources, events, and updates from the field.
- » [Supplemental Research Bulletin](#): Catch up on the latest findings from the literature.

We value your input, please complete a [brief survey](#) about these and other SAMHSA DTAC products.



### Suggestions for Coping After a Disaster

According to SAMHSA, the following stress management activities may help ease disaster-related stress. For more information, check out SAMHSA's [Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Managing Stress](#).

**Talk with others who understand and accept how you feel.** Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or faith-based leader to explore what meaning the event may have for you. Connect with other survivors of the disaster or other traumatic events and share your experience.

**Body movement helps to get rid of the buildup of extra stress hormones.** Exercise once daily or in smaller amounts throughout the day. Be careful not to lift heavy weights. You can damage your muscles if you have too much adrenaline in your system. If you don't like exercise, do something simple, like taking a walk, gently stretching, or meditating.

**Take deep breaths.** Most people can benefit from taking several deep breaths often throughout the day. Deep breathing can move stress out of your body and help you to calm yourself. It can even help stop a panic attack.

**Listen to music.** Music is a way to help your body relax naturally. Play music timed to the breath or to your heartbeat. Create a relaxing playlist for yourself and listen to it often.

**Pay attention to your physical self.** Make sure to get enough sleep and rest each day. Don't leave resting for the weekend. Eat healthy meals and snacks and make sure to drink plenty of water. Avoid caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol, especially in large amounts. Their effects are multiplied under stress and can be harmful, just making things worse.

**Use known coping skills.** How did you handle past traumatic events like a car crash or the death of a loved one? What helped then (e.g., spent time with family, went to a support group meeting)? Try using those coping skills now.

### Helpful Links for Recovery Information

In addition to the resources that follow, for people experiencing emotional distress related to a disaster, SAMHSA offers toll-free crisis counseling and support through the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at 1-800-985-5990.


Contact SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) staff at [dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov) for more information on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery for government agencies, local organizations, nonprofits, and the general public.

### General Public




SAMHSA's [Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Traumatic Event: What to Expect in Your Personal, Family, Work, and Financial Life](#) identifies common effects of disasters and other traumatic events on various aspects of life, suggests steps to take in coping, and lists signs that a disaster survivor may need professional mental health support.


The SAMHSA tip sheet [Tips for Survivors: Coping With Grief After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#) describes grief, suggests ways to cope, and distinguishes grief from complicated or traumatic grief. Resources for additional information and support are also provided.

This [American Red Cross webpage](#)  helps survivors handle the financial challenges they may face after a disaster. Tips are provided for handling insurance claims, cash flow, bills, and debt, as is information about agencies to contact to replace important documents, from a driver's license to a Social Security or Medicare card to a will.

## Children

SAMHSA's [Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers](#) presents common reactions of children and teenagers to a disaster or other traumatic event, offer tips for how adults can support children and teens in coping, and lists resources for additional support.


A SAMHSA DTAC podcast, [Helping Children and Youth Cope in the Aftermath of Disasters: Tips for Parents and Other Caregivers, Teachers, Administrators, and School Staff \(49 minutes\)](#) , is designed to help important adults in the lives of children and youth to be aware of reactions to expect in children and youth after a disaster, as well as approaches to supporting children and youth in coping.

The [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#)  has resources available for various audiences to help children recover after a disaster or other traumatic event.

This [National Council on Family Relations webpage](#)  contains information to assist children after a disaster.

## First Responders

In [Adjusting to Life at Home: Tips for Families of Returning Disaster Responders](#), SAMHSA presents key points to consider for families in which a member is returning home after serving as a disaster responder. The tip sheet suggests steps families can take to help the responder's return home to go smoothly and identifies signs of the need for behavioral health support, as well as signs of positive change a responder may show after returning from an assignment.

The SAMHSA DTAC [Self-care for Disaster Behavioral Health Responders \(57 minutes\)](#)  podcast discusses the stressors that disaster behavioral health responders may face, best practices in self-care for responders, and tools responders can use to assess their levels of stress and coping. The podcast also covers steps that supervisors can take to promote and support responder stress management.

SAMHSA's [Tips for Health Care Practitioners and Responders: Helping Survivors Cope With Grief After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#) indicates ways in which first responders can talk with and support disaster survivors in experiencing and coping with grief.

## Older Adults

The SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS) includes a [collection](#) focused on disaster behavioral health preparedness and response for older adults.

This [Texas Department of State Health Services webpage](#) provides information to help older adults recover emotionally from a disaster.

This [Missouri Department of Mental Health Document \(PDF | 296 KB\)](#) contains information to assist older adults during the recovery process after a disaster.

## Businesses

Users can find links to sites that offer assistance for businesses, local governments, and communities with various disaster-related needs on the [Other Recovery Help webpage](#) at DisasterAssistance.gov.

This [FEMA webpage](#) contains information and links to resources for people whose businesses or farms were damaged in disasters.

This [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation webpage](#) provides tips and resources for businesses to help in the disaster recovery process.

## Tribal Communities

The SAMHSA DBHIS collection [American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal-specific Resources](#) features resources for disaster responders and others working with tribal organizations, as well as for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The [American Indian & Alaskan Native Disaster Preparedness Resource webpage](#) from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response contains information and resources for tribal communities to assist with disaster response and recovery.

This [Tribal Community Disaster Recovery webpage](#) provides information on disaster response and recovery for tribal communities.

Last Updated: 01/16/2020



### Sign Up for SAMHSA Email Updates

To sign up for updates or to access your subscriber preferences, please enter your contact information.



### Language Assistance

Español | 繁體中文 | Tiếng Việt | 한국어 | Tagalog | Русский | العربية | Kreyòl Ayisyen | Français | Polski | Português | Italiano | Deutsch | 日本語 | فارسی | English

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Freedom of Information Act | Nondiscrimination Notice | EEO/No FEAR Act Data | Office of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department Health & Human Services

Have a question about government service? Contact USA.gov.

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and



## Tips for Survivors:

### COPING WITH ANGER AFTER A DISASTER OR OTHER TRAUMATIC EVENT

Many people experience anger after a disaster or other traumatic event. They may feel angry about the damage the disaster has caused, changes to their short- or long-term plans, the long recovery process, financial worries and problems, and their reactions to the disaster that are hard to deal with. They may also feel angry in general about the ways in which the disaster or other trauma has changed their lives.

#### Anger After Disasters

Many researchers think anger is universal—something people in all societies around the world experience. When people are dealing with lots of stress in their lives, anger may be more constant and harder to control. Survivors of disasters may feel angry at individuals and organizations they consider to be responsible for

the disaster. When people get angry, they may experience these changes:

- Their heart may beat faster.
- Their blood pressure may increase.
- Their muscles may tighten.
- They may release adrenaline, which gives them energy.
- They may breathe faster or not as deeply.

Anger has been linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, trouble sleeping, problems with digestion, and headaches. Long-term, unresolved anger has also been linked to depression and anxiety. Anger may lead people to engage in behavior that involves risk, such as use of alcohol and other substances.





## Tips for Calming Yourself

Many people find they become angry more easily than usual following a disaster or other trauma. The following sections describe ways for you to manage and talk with others about your anger that may help improve situations and strengthen relationships in your life.

### Self-management

Anger can become very intense very quickly. It is hard to make good choices and communicate well with others when you feel very angry. When you notice you are angry, take a break. You may want to count to 10, take a quick walk, or try some of the tips below. When you are calmer, you can deal with the anger in a way that is better for you and those around you.

### Communication

If you are angry with a person, it may make sense to talk with him or her directly about it. You may need to wait until your anger is at a manageable level to do this. Here are a few steps you can take to improve communication.

- When you're ready, use "I" statements such as "I feel angry that you haven't filled out the paperwork for us to get assistance."
- Avoid placing blame and acknowledge that the person may provide you with information

that changes how you think and feel about the situation.

- Avoid the words "always," "never," and "should." "Always" and "never" are rarely true, and all three words often involve blaming. They can put the person you're talking to on the defensive, making him or her less open to working with you on finding a way to improve the situation.

### Problem Solving

If you find you are often becoming angry in a specific situation, you may want to consider ways you can change the situation. If you are frustrated by a slower commute to work because of damages and rebuilding along the route you take, try a different route or public transportation if available.

If changes to a situation are not possible, it may help to focus on areas of life you can control. While your commute to work may be frustrating, you may be able to develop relaxation skills or keep up with other healthy habits.

### Forgiveness

Practice forgiveness as much as possible. Forgiveness may take time, but it may also enhance your relationship with the person you forgive.







## Positive Actions Can Help

### Connection to Community

For some people, it may be helpful to talk to someone you trust about your anger. Try these tips to connect with your community.

- **Seek out a support group.** Sometimes these can be found through community centers and disaster recovery programs. It can be very helpful to talk with others who have gone through a similar traumatic experience.
- **Join other groups.** Continue participating in groups and connecting with others in ways that don't have anything to do with the disaster. Attend services at your place of worship and meetings of social or volunteer groups you are part of.

### Relaxation Techniques

These techniques can lower your overall stress level, which in turn can help you manage your anger and use it in productive ways. It's a good idea to practice at least once each day, so you can build your skills in calming down. Try these tips to help you relax.

- **Deep breathing.** Try to breathe from your abdominal area instead of from your chest. Imagine your breath going into and out of your belly as you breathe.

- **Visualization.** Imagine that you are in a place that is peaceful and calming to you—a place you've been, or one where you would like to be.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** Tighten and then relax each muscle group in your body. It often helps to go from head to toe or vice versa.
- **Gentle stretching, yoga, or tai chi.** Slow to moderate speed and gentle movements may help you calm down when things are stressful.

### Habits of Health

It may be hard to keep up with healthy habits after a disaster, when your access to resources may be limited, and you may not be living at home. Do your best and give yourself credit for all you do. Try these tips to stay healthy:

- **Be physically active.** One way to reduce stress and improve mood for many people is to be physically active. Try a walk or run with a friend or alone, push-ups or sit-ups at home, or anything else you enjoy and that helps you feel better over time.
- **Sleep and eat well.** If possible, get enough sleep. Aim for 7 to 9 hours a night, the amount that most adults need. Do your best to eat healthy food, including plenty of fruits, vegetables, and water, if available.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** Although it may be tempting to use them to make anger feel more manageable, they lower people's ability to control their behavior. Drugs and alcohol can sometimes lead people to act on anger in ways that have negative effects over the short or long term.





## When To Seek Professional Support

People can feel anger at any time throughout their lives, no matter their stress level. In the first 2 to 4 weeks after a disaster, you may notice more anger in yourself, along with many other signs of distress. These are common among disaster survivors.

Some signs that you may need professional support include the following:

- Your anger seems out of control.
- You do things because of your anger that you regret.
- You have hurt people around you as a result of your anger.
- Your friends and family members have said that they think you have a problem with anger, or they have spent less time with you because of things that happened when you were angry.
- Your anger lasts longer than 1 month.
- You have arguments with coworkers.
- You are no longer welcome in certain businesses because of past behavior there.
- You have been violent when you were angry, or you have thought about being violent.

If you are feeling uncontrolled or overwhelming anger, we encourage you to use the resources on this page for getting help.

## Helpful Resources

### SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-free: 1-800-308-3515

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

### SAMHSA Behavioral Health Disaster Response Mobile App

Website: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/PEP13-DKAPP-1>

### Administration for Children and Families

Website: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov>

### Mental Health America\*

Website: <https://www.mhanational.org>

### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)\*

Toll-free helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI (1-800-950-6264)

Website: <https://www.nami.org>

## Treatment Locators

### SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-free: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

(24/7 English and español)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

Website: <https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

### MentalHealth.gov

Website: <https://mentalhealth.gov>

*MentalHealth.gov provides U.S. government information and resources on mental health.*

## Helplines

### SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/ind-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to get help and support 24/7.

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)

Website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

\*Note: The views, opinions, and content expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

# SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration





## Emergency Preparedness and Response

Emergency Preparedness and Response > [Protect Yourself and Loved Ones](#)  
> [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)



[Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)

**Protect Yourself and Loved Ones**

[Prepare Your Health](#)

[Shelter In Place](#)

**Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event**

**Taking Care of Your Emotional Health**

[Helping Children Cope](#)

[Response Resources for Leaders](#)

[Resources for State and Local Governments](#)

[Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself](#)

[Information on Specific Types of Emergencies](#)

[Information for Specific Groups](#)

[Resources for Emergency Health Professionals](#)

[Social Media](#)

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**More on Preparedness**

[What CDC is Doing](#)

[Blog: Public Health Matters](#)



# Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

[Spanish](#)



**The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), may be stressful for people and communities.**

[Learn more](#) about coping during COVID-19.

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during an emergency will help your long-term healing.

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) website.**



- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- People with deafness or hearing loss can use their preferred relay service to call 1-800-985-5990.

### Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:

- **Take care of your body**– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Learn more about [wellness strategies](#) for mental health.
- **Connect with others**– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system.
- **Take breaks**– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
- **Stay informed**– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.
- **Avoid too much exposure to news**– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.
- **Seek help when needed**– If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at **1-800-985-5990**.

### Look out for these common signs of distress:

- Feelings of feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

If you experience these feelings or behaviors for several days in a row and are unable to carry out normal responsibilities because of them, [seek professional help](#).

## Additional Resources

- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Video: Coping with a Traumatic Event](#)
- [SAMHSA's Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery](#)
- [Coping with Isolation and Quarantine \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Psychological First Aid \(National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)

### Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event



Download the fact sheet  
[PDF - 224K]  
[English Version](#)



Stay informed, take breaks, and connect with others to help cope during disasters.

#### HAVE QUESTIONS?

- Visit CDC-INFO
- Call 800-232-4636
- Email CDC-INFO
- Open 24/7

#### CDC INFORMATION

- About CDC
- Jobs
- Funding
- Policies
- File Viewers & Players

#### Privacy

- FOIA
- No Fear Act
- OIG
- Nondiscrimination
- Accessibility

#### CONNECT WITH CDC

