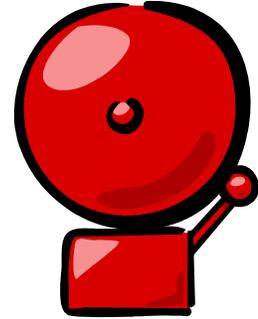


# Coping with Disasters

Physical and emotional reactions often occur as a result of a natural emergency or traumatic event. These reactions may happen immediately or weeks or months after an event. Traumatic stress reactions can happen to people of any age and can change a person's behavior, thoughts and physical health.



## Common Responses

The physical effects caused by a traumatic event include:

- Rapid heartbeat, increased respiratory rate
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Muscle and joint aches, headaches
- Tremors

Seek medical attention if any of the above symptoms persist.

Thoughts, behaviors and emotions may also change. These changes include:

- Flashbacks or re-experiencing the event
- Withdrawal from normal social relations
- Performance problems at work or school
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, numb
- Being extremely anxious, fearful, agitated or irritable
- Feeling depressed
- Increased consumption of alcohol or prescribed, over-the-counter or illicit drugs

## What You Can Do for Yourself

There are many things you can do to cope with traumatic events.

- Understand that your symptoms may be normal, especially right after the trauma.
- Keep to your usual routine.
- Take the time to resolve day-to-day conflicts so they do not add to your stress.
- Do not shy away from situations, people and places that remind you of the trauma.
- Find ways to relax and be kind to yourself.
- Turn to family, friends, and clergy person for support, and talk about your experiences and feelings with them.
- Participate in leisure and recreational activities.
- Recognize that you cannot control everything.
- Recognize the need for trained help, and call a local mental health center.

## What You Can Do for Your Child

- Let your child know that it is okay to feel upset when something bad or scary happens.
- Encourage your child to express feelings and thoughts, without aiming judgments.
- Return to daily routines.