

How to Cope following a Natural Disaster



Natural disasters, like floods, can have a significant, on-going impact on our health and wellbeing. While everyone will react differently to a natural disaster, it's important to remember that these reactions are a normal, healthy human response.

Common Reactions

It is common to feel distressed, think a lot about the event, have vivid memories of the incident, and question why the event happened and what could have been done to prevent it. Feelings such as shock, anger, sadness, and fear are normal, and can occur with physical reactions such as appetite loss, muscle tension, fatigue and restlessness.

Taking Care of Yourself

- **Stay Connected**
 - Keep your social plans and stay connected with the people in your life, even if you don't feel like participating.
 - Spend time with supportive family, friends, or co-workers. Express any worries or fears you may have and how your coping.
- **Stay Grounded**
 - Let memories or thoughts of the event come and go. Just notice them when they are there and allow them to go out of your mind again. You don't have to push them away, and you don't have to be swept up in trying to think your way through them.
 - Stay physically grounded. You can use slow deep breathing for 1 minute or use physical activity and exercise to help you be connected with exactly where you are.
 - Do one thing every day that you usually enjoy.
 - Be patient and kind to yourself, allow that it might take time to adjust.
 - Though it's normal to sometimes ask yourself "what if", refrain from dwelling on hypotheticals.
 - Gradually face the situations and memories you may wish to avoid.

- **Make Health-Promoting Choices**

- Allow yourself time on your own to rest, think, and feel.
- Go back to your normal routine as soon as possible.
- Eat appropriate amounts of nutritious food.
- Exercise as you normally would, even if you don't feel like it.

- **Things to Avoid**

- Avoid blocking out thoughts or feelings, even if they are unpleasant. Thinking and feeling the reactions we have natural disasters are part of our adjustment process. That process can happen in the quickest and healthiest way if we don't block those thoughts and emotions.
- Don't avoid people or places that make you think about the incident. Though it may be uncomfortable or distressing to be reminded, letting yourself be gently or gradually exposed to those things will be part of your recovery.
- Don't tell yourself you are going crazy, or that you are weak or helpless. Let your reaction be what it needs to be, without judging yourself.
- Reach out for help early to make sure you are on the right track for recovery from the very beginning.
- Avoid making, permanent decisions when you are feeling distressed. Your best decisions are made when you are at your best, physically and emotionally. So, wait until the stress has passed before making big decisions again.

We are here to help

The Benestar team are here to help you, and your family cope following a natural disaster. For free, confidential coaching and support contact us on **0800 360 364** or

counsellingsupportnz@benestar.com



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