



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF

Mental Health

AFTER THE DISASTER

Having experienced the shock and pain of the disaster, you will be very busy the next few days or weeks. Caring for your immediate needs, perhaps finding a new place to stay, planning for cleanup and repairs, and filing claim forms may occupy the majority of your time. As the immediate shock wears off, you will start to rebuild and put your life back together. There are some normal reactions we may all experience as a result of the disaster. Generally, these feelings don't last long, but it is common to feel let down and resentful many months after the event. Some feelings or responses may not appear until weeks or even months after the disaster.

Some common responses are:

- ❖ Irritability/Anger
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Loss of appetite
- ❖ Inability to sleep
- ❖ Nightmares
- ❖ Sadness
- ❖ Headaches or nausea
- ❖ Hyperactivity
- ❖ Lack of concentration
- ❖ Increased alcohol or drug consumption

Many victims of disaster will have at least one of these responses. Acknowledging your feelings and stress is the first step in feeling better. Other helpful things to do include:

- ❖ Talk about your disaster experiences. Sharing your feelings rather than holding them in will help you feel better about what happened.
- ❖ Take time off from cares, worries, and home repairs. Take time for recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby. Getting away from home for a day or a few hours with close friends can help.
- ❖ Pay attention to your health, to good diet and adequate sleep. Relaxation exercises may help if you have difficulty sleeping.
- ❖ Prepare for possible future emergencies to help lessen feelings of helplessness and bring peace of mind.
- ❖ Rebuild personal relationships in addition to repairing other aspects of your life. Couples should make time to be alone together, both to talk and to have fun.

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue, you may wish to contact the post-disaster services provided by your local mental health disaster recovery program.

Please take this sheet with you today and reread it over the next few weeks and months. Being aware of your feelings and sharing them with others is an important part of recovery and feeling normal again soon.