



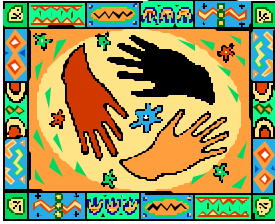
Brief Tips about Self-Care for Caregivers

Common reactions to traumatic events like Hurricane Katrina include feeling afraid, sad, horrified, helpless, angry, overwhelmed, confused, distracted, emotionally numb, or disoriented. People may also be bothered by nightmares or upsetting thoughts and images that come to mind. Young children may be upset, distracted, or feel out of sorts. These are normal reactions to very stressful events. With the help of family, friends, and colleagues, most people eventually feel better as time goes on.

What can people do to cope?

- Spend time with other people. Coping with stressful events is easier when most people support each other.
- If it helps, talk about how you are feeling. Be willing to listen to others who need to talk about how they feel.
- Get back to your everyday routines. Familiar habits can be very comforting.
- Take time to grieve and cry if you need to. To feel better in the long run, you need to let these feelings out instead of pushing them away or hiding them.
- Ask for support and help from your family, friends, church, or other community resources. Join or develop support groups.
- Set small goals to tackle big problems. Take one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
- Eat healthy food and take time to walk, stretch, exercise, and relax, even if for a few minutes at a time.
- Make sure you get enough rest and sleep. People often need more sleep than usual when they are very stressed.
- Do something that just feels good to you like taking a warm bath, taking a walk, sitting in the sun, or petting your cat or dog.
- If you are trying to do too much, try to cut back by putting off or giving up a few things that are not absolutely necessary.
- Find something positive you can do. Give blood. Donate money to respond to the tragedy.
- Get away from the stress of the event sometimes. Turn off the TV news reports and distract yourself by doing something you enjoy.

Taken directly from the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder publication, *Brief Tips about Self-Care and Self-Help Following Disasters*. Available online at www.ncptsd.va.gov Additional information is available at www.dimage.com. Click on Links and Other Resources — Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Emergency Preparedness.



Brief Tips for Helping People with Developmental Disabilities After a Traumatic Event

Common reactions in people who experience developmental disabilities to traumatic events: Inexplicable episodes of screaming, throwing things, or property destruction, out of proportion kinds of reactions to normal changes or stressors, rage attacks, abrupt physical assault (often to people they most like), appearing un-focused (not with it), having excessive amounts of energy, experiencing nightmares, sometimes behaving like they are somewhere else, unable to respond to people during the experience, expressing physical complaints (e.g., stomach upset, headache).

What can you do to help?

- Presume competence. When you are unsure of a person's capacity to understand what has taken place, presume that he/she can understand.
- Let the person know that you understand his/her feelings. Assure him/her that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe ("the worst is over").
- Help the person to return to a normal routine as soon as possible. If it is impossible to return to a 'normal' life, help the person to develop new and soothing routines and rituals.
- Eat healthy foods and stay active. Take walks. Stretch.
- Keep the person from seeing too many frightening pictures of the events.
- Make fun a goal.
- If the person becomes aggressive or threatening, let her/him know in a calm way that you cannot allow him/her to hurt self or others. Tell the person that you will help him/her to stay safe. Provide support rather than admonishment.
- If the person is taking medications, make sure that he/she is taking the medicine properly and that appropriate blood levels are maintained. Understand too that stress creates havoc in the body (e.g., disruption in sleeping patterns) that can lead to difficult behaviors.
- Help the person to find ways to help others that are satisfying and meaningful.

Adapted from the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder publication, *Brief Tips about Self-Care and Self-Help Following Disasters*. Available online at www.ncptsd.va.gov and *Supporting a Person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* available at www.dimage.com.