

Predicting and Preparing for Emotional Reactions

Not everyone will have an emotional reaction to the flood, and those who do will react in their own unique way. Some of the more typical emotional reactions may include:

- Recurring dreams or nightmares about the floods;
- Trouble concentrating or remembering things;
- Feeling numb, withdrawn or disconnected;
- Having bursts of anger or intense irritability;
- Persistent physical symptoms (i.e., headaches, digestive problems, muscle tension, etc.);
- Being overprotective of your family's safety;
- Avoiding reminders of the flood;
- Being tearful or crying for no apparent reason

Techniques for Managing Stress and Anxiety

Some useful suggestions for coping with the stress and anxiety stemming from the flood include:

- Limiting your exposure to graphic news stories about the flood or other disasters;
- Getting accurate, timely information from credible sources;
- Educating yourself about health hazards and safety information;
- Getting back to your normal routine as soon as possible, this is especially important for children;
- Exercising, eating well and resting;
- Staying busy- physically and mentally
- Communicating with friends, family and supporters;
- Using spirituality and your personal beliefs;
- Keeping a sense of humor;
- Expressing yourself through writing, poetry, drawing, etc.;
- Talking and sharing your feelings with others.

Coping with the Emotional Impact of the Flood



Understanding the Impact and Exploring Strategies for Coping

NJ Department of Human Services
Division of Mental Health Services
Disaster Mental Health Services
Hunterdon County Department of
Human Services
(908) 788-1372

For counseling or referral
information
toll-free
Hunterdon Helpline
211
or
1-800-272-4630
or
(877) 294-HELP
and online at
www.projectphoenixnj.com

The Emotional Response to Floods

No one who lives through a disaster is untouched by the experience. Like other disasters, floods and severe storms can result in emotional distress, as well as property damage. Disasters can threaten our sense of control and safety, and can affect many aspects of our lives.

Disaster stress that is unrecognized or unmanaged can impact our physical and mental health. Dealing with the emotional consequences soon after a disaster can help reduce the possibility of long-term problems. Recognizing and handling stress properly can help you meet the challenges of recovering from a flood and reclaiming your sense of control and security.

This brochure addresses the impact of floods and strategies for coping. Remember, you don't have to go it alone! There are several services listed on this brochure that can assist you in managing the emotional consequences of the flood. Please feel free to reach out to learn more about what behavioral healthcare services are available as your community recovers from the flood.

A Normal Reaction to an Abnormal Event

The first step in managing the emotional consequences of disasters is realizing that they are the *"normal reactions, normal people have to abnormal situations."* Keep in mind that worrying is normal, but excessive worrying is not.

Disaster stress affects everyone differently. Most disaster stress reactions are temporary and resolve by themselves over time. Reminders of the flood, such as sudden or powerful storms often bring back many of the same thoughts and feelings experienced on the day of the flood. For some people, these powerful emotional reactions do not go away quickly or by themselves. That's when professional mental health services may be necessary.

Most importantly, remember that you are not alone. Others may be having the same reactions, and can share their coping tips with you. Talking helps, and there are counselors available in your community and by telephone if you would like to share your thoughts and feelings.

Many Ways to React... Many Ways to Cope

It is important to remember that there is no one correct way to react emotionally to the flood. Not everyone reacts the same way, and in fact, you may react in a variety of different ways even in the course of the same day. Each person gets through the emotional challenges of a disaster in their own time and on their own terms.

The best predictor of how a person will react to a disaster is how they have reacted to other challenges in the past, and likewise, the best strategies for coping now are those strategies that have worked well in the past.

To help you best manage the emotions associated with the flood, you should use the coping mechanisms that are familiar and comfortable for you. Other ideas for coping are explored in this brochure and can be discussed with the counselors and other caregivers.