

Tips on Taking Care of Your Family During Stressful and Traumatic Events



Disasters and other traumatic events can disrupt the normal flow of life. The stress they cause can leave members of your family frightened, confused and insecure; whether they experience the event directly, see it on television, or hear about it from others. Relationship problems and difficulties with children can result from such stress.

Here are tips that can help your family manage stress and cope better.

- 📌 Spend time with your family and maintain familiar routines, such as family meals.
- 📌 Talk to your family and listen to what they have to say about their experiences.
- 📌 Accept that other family members' feelings and reactions to stressful and traumatic events may be different from yours.
- 📌 Give and ask for support from family members.
- 📌 Remind your family that things may not get back to normal immediately and that physically and emotionally healing takes time.
- 📌 Involve all family members in problem solving and coping with stressful situation.
- 📌 Take time to do fun things together.

YOUR CHILDREN

Children do not understand the world the same ways as adults do. After experiencing a traumatic event, they look to adults to explain what is happening and for guidance on what to do.

- 📌 Be aware of your children's normal reactions to stressful and traumatic events, so you can recognize them for what they are. These reactions can affect the way your children feel, think and behave. Their reactions vary depending on their age and understanding of what happened.
- 📌 Stay calm, as your reactions affect your children. If they see that you are extremely worried, it can make them feel afraid and insecure.
- 📌 Talk to your children about what happened, answer their questions in a way that they can understand, and let them express their feelings.
- 📌 Reassure your children about their safety and that they are in no way responsible for what happened.
- 📌 Limit their exposure to disturbing news and images by limiting the amount of television they watch and monitoring their internet access.

After experiencing a stressful or traumatic event:

Be patient with yourself and those around you.

Give everyone time to cope, adapt and heal.

The information in this tip sheet will help you understand what you can do to be better prepared to cope with stressful and traumatic events.

ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS

Traumatic events can be even more stressful for the elderly because of health concerns, worries about the future, and housing and financial security, among other things.

- Be patient if they seem confused or disoriented, as they may need further explanation and reassurance.
- Make sure that they are safe and that their basic personal and medical needs are addressed.
- Don't let them become socially isolated.
- Help them regain hope for the future by including them in the process of rebuilding your lives.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Take Care of Your Body

- Get enough sleep. Eat regular, healthy meals and be physically active.
- Avoid drinking excessively or using drugs or tobacco to help you cope.

Take Care of Your Emotional Health

- Do things that help you recharge and feel in control of your life. Set realistic goals for the future.
- Try to remain positive. Focus on your strengths and past accomplishments.
- Make time to reflect, meditate or pray.
- Save some time for participating in activities you enjoy.

Reach Out

- Do not be afraid to express your feelings or to talk about your experiences.
- Do not hesitate to ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or discouraged.
- Don't become isolated. Accept support - people do care!

Reduce Your Stress

- Do things you find comforting such as reading, listening to music, or exercising.
- During a disaster keep yourself informed by obtaining information from reliable resources, but do not become preoccupied with the news. Watching too much media coverage of the event can be upsetting to you and those others around you, including your children.

Manage Your Workload

- Maintain a healthy balance between work and rest.
- As you try to cope, do not let work take over your life.

KNOW WHEN AND WHERE TO FIND HELP

Most reactions to stress are transient, and most people recover with time and support. Stress reactions can appear immediately after the event or may not appear for weeks or even months. If the ***symptoms persist***, or if they ***worsen*** or ***interfere with daily functioning***, you should consider seeking professional help.

If you feel overwhelmed or are concerned about yourself or someone else, call **1-800 LIFENET**, a free, confidential helpline for New York City residents, available 24/7. Trained LifeNet staff are ready to take your calls.

***If you or anyone
in your family
feels
overwhelmed –
reach out.***

Help is available!

**1-800-LifeNet
1-800-543-3638
(English)**

**1-877-Ayudese
1-877-298-3373
(Spanish)**

**1-877-990-8585
(Chinese)**

**1-212-982-5284
(TTY)**

