

# COPING WITH TRAUMA & NATURAL DISASTERS



## COMMON REACTIONS

The emotional impact of a natural disaster (like a wildfire or flood) can stick around long after the danger has passed. As you return home, know that it's common to have a range of reactions, including:

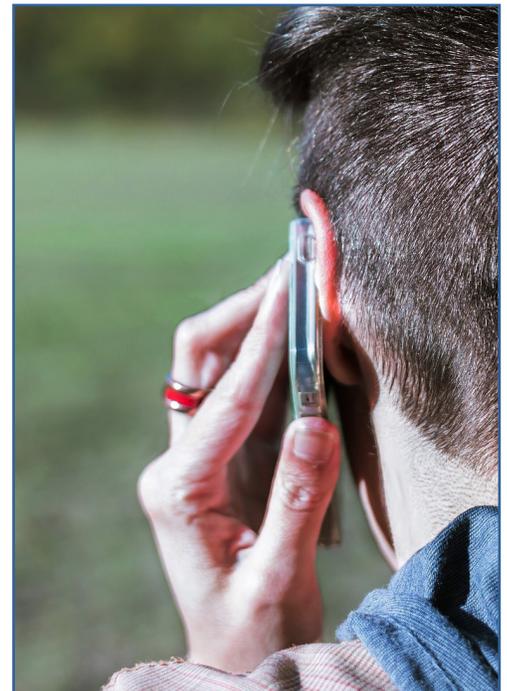
- Feelings of fear, anger, or sadness
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or sleeping
- Physical distress, like an upset stomach, a racing heart, headaches, or sweating
- Wanting to isolate yourself and avoid family or friends
- Thoughts of helplessness

## SIGNS YOU OR A LOVED ONE MAY NEED HELP

Difficult emotions are natural following a traumatic event. If you are having trouble coping or if the difficult emotions continue or interfere with your daily life, it may be time to seek help. Pay attention to these signs:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling extreme emotional highs and/or lows
- Ongoing trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Inability to do your usual activities or handle daily problems
- Difficulty understanding or relating to other people
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Hearing voices or seeing things that don't exist
- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself or others
- Other behavior that feels out of control

You are not alone. If you are having one or more of these reactions, seek expert help. **Helpline phone numbers are on the back of this sheet.**



## FOR PARENTS SUPPORTING CHILDREN

It's important for parents to help children who may be having trouble coping. With support from adults, children and youth can thrive and recover. Here's how you can help:

- Regularly ask them how they are feeling and what might help them cope.
- Allow them to ask questions. Listen carefully and answer them honestly.
- Stick to routines, including healthy eating, sleeping, and exercise habits.
- Prevent too much exposure to news or social media.
- Encourage them to participate in fun activities, spend time with friends, or be creative.
- Look for signs of distress and allow them to remove themselves from situations that are hard for them.
- Seek expert help if they are having difficulty coping.



## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

As you cope, always take care of your own health. Follow these suggestions for relieving stress:

- Talk with trusted friends and loved ones about what happened and how you feel.
- Get regular exercise, but avoid exercising too much. If you don't like to exercise, consider gentle walking, stretching, or meditating.
- Take deep breaths. Deep breathing can calm your body and help you work through stress.
- Listen to music. A calming playlist can help you relax and distract you from difficult emotions.
- Take care of your physical self. Eat healthy meals. Drink plenty of water. Make time to sleep. Avoid too much alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine. Too much of these can make stress worse.

## ACCESS 24/7 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

*If you or someone you know is struggling, help is available. Get around-the-clock mental health help from these resources:*

### **Multnomah County Mental Health Call Center (503-988-4888)**

Free 24/7 mental health helpline staffed by mental health professionals. Services include crisis counseling, behavioral health information, and referral to providers. Multilingual and multicultural support is available.

### **Urgent Walk-In Clinic (4212 SE Division Street, Portland, OR)**

Free face-to-face support from mental health experts. Open 7 days a week, 7am to 10:30pm. It serves all Multnomah County residents regardless of insurance, income, or age.

### **Hood River County Crisis Line (541-386-2620)**

Free 24/7 mental health crisis line for Hood River County residents. It is staffed with mental health professionals who will address any and all mental health crisis situations.

### **Lines for Life Helpline (800-273-8255)**

Regional 24/7 mental health helpline that anyone can access for free. Lines for Life also specializes in services for teens and military veterans.