

## Responder Selfcare

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

### Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during an emergency will help your long-term healing.

#### Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:

- **Take care of your body**– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Connect with others**– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system.
- **Take breaks**– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
- **Stay informed**– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.
- **Avoid too much exposure to news**– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.
- **Seek help when needed**– If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a trusted peer, counselor, clergy member, Regional CISM Team or mental health professional.

#### Look out for these common signs of distress:

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Anger or short-temper.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

If you experience these feelings or behaviors for several days in a row and are unable to carry out normal responsibilities because of them, seek assistance.

- Speak with your supervisor or with someone you trust and confidence in for support
- Iowa's Regional Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Network Hotline 515-382-3951
- Peer Support Foundation 515-978-1078 or e-mail [contact@peersupportfoundation.org](mailto:contact@peersupportfoundation.org)
- Agency Employees Assistance Programs (EAP)
- 911 for emergencies where you feel you may want to harm yourself or another person