

The Psychological Effects of Natural Disasters



Krist Samaritan Center

While many of us have either personally experienced a natural disaster or known someone who has, most don't realize the after-effects of going through such a traumatic event. From hurricanes and tornadoes to wildfires and earthquakes, natural disasters affect millions of people every year.

While the physical damage of flooded cars and broken windows is easily visible, often we experience emotional turmoil that's harder to see. After a natural disaster, there is much to repair and such stressors put victims at risk of emotional re-adjustment issues. Below are a few helpful tips that can help you learn to cope after experiencing a disaster.

Use this checklist as reminder to maintain a positive outlook after going through the trauma of a natural disaster.

1. Find a safe haven

Make your surroundings as comfortable and as close to normal as possible. Constant reminders of disaster's destruction can hinder you from moving on.

2. Prioritize

If you try to handle everything at once, you'll feel overwhelmed. Discuss with your family the most important issues that need immediate attention.

3. Communicate

It's extremely important to maintain constant communication with your family, peers and therapists. This will allow you to feel connected and give you the chance to "tell your story" to avoid bottling up your emotions.

4. Utilize your resources

Counseling centers, religious facilities and many other organizations are there to help. Seek their help and encourage your family and friends to do the same.

5. Keep a journal

Writing down your thoughts and feelings is often an effective way of identifying reoccurring negative feelings. Once you're aware of what's really troubling you, it's easier to address those issues in the future and release stress and anxiety.

6. Don't play the blame game

It's easy to blame others in the wake of a crisis. Don't let yourself fall into this trap. It does not lead to anything productive and only causes hurt.

7. Stay positive

Attitude is everything. This phrase is used so often because it's true. Positive thinking leads to positive outcomes.

8. Exercise

Exercise relieves stress. It allows the body to release endorphins which make you feel happy.

9. Sleep

This is very important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and mindset. If your home is too damaged to safely live in, stay with an understanding friend or family member. This will allow you to relax and get rest that you desperately require.

10. Take care

Don't lose sight of yourself. You're still the same person you were prior to the disaster, only with a slightly different outlook. Take care of yourself and do the things you enjoy most.