

The Emotional Response to Severe Weather

No one who sees a disaster is untouched by the experience. Like other disasters, severe weather such as storms or floods 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.



Unrecognized or unmanaged disaster stress can impact our physical and behavioral 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 severe weather and reclaiming your sense of control and security.



Remember that 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 these events. Please feel free to reach out to learn more about what behavioral healthcare services are available as your community recovers from severe weather.

Staying Connected

Often the best source of assistance in dealing with the emotional aspect of emergencies is found in each other. If you are anxious, talk to someone you love or trust. This may be a family member, friend, clergy member or teacher. Don't keep your fears to yourself.

If you notice that a loved one, friend or co-worker's behavior has substantially changed, reach out and ask them how they are doing. Make some time to talk, when it is convenient for both of you, and follow up later to see how they are doing. Watching out for each other demonstrates you care and can be comforting to both of you.



If you or someone you know is having a severe emotional reaction that does not subside over the period of a few days, it may be best to seek the assistance of a medical or behavioral health professional.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!
Call 614-644-6996



**Ohio Department of Mental Health
Disaster Emergency and Terrorism
Preparedness and Response Services**

**For more information, call ODMH at:
614-644-6996 or 614-995-1400**

**Or go online at:
[http://www.mh.state.oh.us/ibhs/
centraloffice/allhazards.html](http://www.mh.state.oh.us/ibhs/centraloffice/allhazards.html)**

July 2006

Managing the Emotional Consequences of Severe Weather

**Understanding the Impact and
Exploring Strategies for Coping
with Weather Emergencies**



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Disaster Emergency and Terrorism
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Predicting and Preparing for Emotional Reactions

Not everyone will have an emotional reaction to severe weather. 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 severe weather
- 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 severe weather
- Being tearful or crying for no apparent reason



Many Ways to React... Many Ways to Cope

It is important to remember that there is no one correct way to react emotionally to severe weather. 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 storm and 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.

Techniques for Managing Stress and Anxiety

Here are some useful suggestions for coping with the stress and anxiety stemming from severe weather:

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from credible sources
- Seek out and follow the experts' advice
- Educate yourself about the specific hazards
- Try to maintain your normal daily routine
- Exercise, eat well and rest
- Stay busy- physically and mentally
- Communicate with friends, family and supporters
- Use spirituality and your personal beliefs
- Keep a sense of humor
- Express yourself through writing, poetry, drawing, etc.
- Talk and share your feelings with others

