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# STRESS REACTIONS and COPING TOOLS for DISASTER

*(The following tips were developed by the Emotional and Spiritual Support Group of ND VO-AD Group for the regional flooding in 2009)*

Disaster affects people in a variety of ways. All of these responses are normal reactions to an abnormal situation, which can persist for weeks after the disaster.

## **Normal Reactions to a Disaster**

### Physical

Changes in appetite and digestive problems. Difficulty in sleeping. Fatigue and lack of energy. Headaches. Other aches and pains. Allergies and sinus problems. Colds and flu.

### Emotional

Irritability and anger. Feeling down or depressed. Apathy. Suspiciousness. Crying for no apparent Reason. Frustration. Feeling powerless over the future. Feeling overwhelmed. Moodiness. Irritability. Anxiety about the future. Guilt. Rejection of others' help. Isolation from friends and family.

### In Youth

Clinging to parent. Reluctance to go to bed. Nightmares. Enactment of the disaster in play. Crying. Withdrawal. Refusal to leave home. Problems at school or child care. Inability to concentrate.

## **COPING TOOLS FOR MANAGING DISASTER-RELATED STRESS**

### Remember the 3 R's

#### Rest

Take time to sleep or rest.  
Take time to relax with friends and family.  
Remember that taking care of yourself gives you the energy necessary to take care of others.

#### Routine

Being in a routine is comforting to mind and body, and especially helpful for children  
Even with changing circumstances, having a routine for meals and rest is important

#### Relationships

Spend time with others. Talk about your feelings. Others probably experience the same feelings.  
Help others in your community. Ask your friends and neighbors how they are doing.  
Be tolerant of irritability, poor concentration, and other common reactions to stress.  
Maintain a friendly attitude - a smile can go a long way to brightening someone's day.

## **WHEN AND WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?**