

Natural Disasters impact entire communities, including organisations, their employees and families. People may be forced to evacuate their homes and workplaces and leave cherished possessions behind as they turn their focus to survival. It is common to experience a range of intense emotions during and after a natural disaster like we are currently experiencing. The immediate loss of control and threat to personal safety is frightening and can lead to severe and acute shock, distress, and anxiety. People who have faced potential loss, injury, or even death, from natural disasters will experience a range of feelings immediately, weeks and even months later. Some people may have experienced similar disasters such as floods, and they may be triggered by past memories and experiences.

It's common to experience a range of intense and sometimes confusing emotions, such as numbness/emptiness, anxiety, fear, sadness, guilt, regret, anger or relief. These emotional responses are normal responses to an uncommon event.

Self-help strategies

Traumatic events impact on people in different ways. You may experience sleeping difficulties, have difficulty concentrating or experience symptoms of fear and anxiety. Be prepared that you will be impacted. It is normal initially to feel numb, shocked, afraid, and these may be replaced by anger, helplessness or grief. There is no right or wrong way to feel. It may take a few days for the acute responses to pass.

There are some things you can do:

- Acknowledge your emotions and share them with people you trust.
- Keep in touch with your friends, family and colleagues and ask for help
- Find ways to reassure yourself and others – we can get through this together
- Look out for children who may be feeling scared and need to feel safe

Tips for family and friends

- Having your loved one or friend involved in a traumatic event can have an impact on you as well. It is often difficult to know how you can help. You can provide valuable support by just being there to connect with them and just listen.
- Don't take it personally if they don't want to talk. Remind them you are there if they change their mind. Offer practical help, a meal, look after pets, children, with clean up.
- Try to give them space and time to recover in their own way.
- Their reactions may be confusing to you; understand that it is a difficult time, and acute reactions to a traumatic event may be powerful. It is unhelpful at these times to say things like; 'It could have been worse.' or "You are lucky".

You may, at some point following the event, wish to speak confidentially with a counsellor who to help support your wellbeing. We will understand your emotional response, will listen without judgment, offer information, and assist you with strategies to help you manage your health and wellbeing now and in the future.

If you are in Australia please call on **1800 818 728** or if you are in **New Zealand**, please call us on **0800 327 669**.

