

Emotional Reactions to Traumatic Events

A natural disaster, like a tornado, often causes more than property damage—it also brings a flood of emotions. It is important to understand what these reactions may be and learn how to cope with them because it may impact your ability to affectively cope and recover afterwards.

Emotional Reactions. Right after a harrowing experience, many people feel stunned, shocked or as though what they experienced simply wasn't real. Reactions like these are normal and allow one to get through the immediate event.

Ways to Cope. Here are some things to do to help restore your sense of control and well-being:

- **Get support from people you love and trust.** Talking about the event can help you process it and feel more in control.
- **Use your agency's resources,** like the Employee Assistance Program, to help you through.
- **Give yourself time.** If you have suffered from a tremendous shock, you can't be expected to "bounce back" quickly. Be patient with yourself and ask others to be patient, too.
- **Try not to compare yourself with others.** Everyone reacts differently to traumatic experiences.
- **Avoid using alcohol or non-prescription drugs** to handle your emotions.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well-balanced meals as best as you can, get plenty of rest and try to get some exercise.
- **Write down your feelings.** This can be especially helpful before going to bed.

Getting Help. Some people find they can get through the stress by using their own support systems, while others find that professional help allows them to gain a sense of control and emotional well-being. If stress reactions persist and make it difficult to handle your day-to-day routine and maintain caring relationships with others, it is important to seek professional help. If feelings of sadness, anger or despair continue, or if you are having thoughts of suicide, seek professional help immediately.

Your Employee Assistance Program is an agency benefit that is free and completely confidential. If you are suffering from the affects of Alabama's recent storms and tornadoes, contact BHS at 800-245-1150. Your Care Coordinator will talk with you about options for support.