



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

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Health Tips to Deal with Traumatic Events

With the arrival of Hurricane Irene in Maryland, many residents may be suffering from severe anxiety, stress and trauma. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and local health departments are offering the following tips to help persons deal with these traumatic events:

When a traumatic event turns your world upside down

- After surviving a disaster or act of violence, people may feel dazed or even numb. They may also feel sad, helpless, or anxious. In spite of the tragedy, some people just feel happy to be alive.
- It is not unusual to have bad memories or dreams. You may avoid places or people that remind you of the disaster. You might have trouble sleeping, eating, or paying attention. Many people have short tempers and get angry easily.
- These are all normal reactions to stress.

It will take time before you start to feel better

- You may have strong feelings right away. Or you may not notice a change until much later, after the crisis is over.
- Stress can change how you act with your friends and family. It will take time for you to feel better and for your life to return to normal.
- Give yourself time to heal.

These steps may help you feel better

A traumatic event disrupts your life. There is no simple fix to make things better right away. But there are actions that can help you, your family, and your community. Try to:

- Follow a normal routine as much as possible.
- Eat healthy meals. Be careful not to skip meals or to overeat.
- Exercise and stay active.
- Help other people in your community as a volunteer. Stay busy.

- Accept help from family, friends, co-workers, or clergy.
- Talk about your feelings with family, friends, co-workers, or clergy.
- Limit your time around the sights and sounds of what happened.
- Don't dwell on TV, radio, or newspaper reports on the tragedy.

Sometimes the stress can be too much to handle alone

Ask for help if you:

- Are not able to take care of yourself or your children.
- Are not able to do your job.
- Use alcohol or drugs to get away from your problems.
- Feel sad or depressed for more than two weeks
- Think about suicide.

If you or someone you know is having trouble dealing with the tragedy, ask for help. Talk to a counselor, your doctor, or community organization, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK).

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