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## COPING WITH STRESS AFTER HURRICANE IRMA



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**Tallahassee, Fla.**—Feeling stressed before or after a traumatic event like a hurricane is normal. But, this stress becomes a problem when we are unable to cope well with it and when the stress gets in the way of taking care of ourselves and family, going to school, or doing our jobs. Coping well with stress begins with recognizing how we are reacting and then by taking steps to manage our reactions in a healthy way.

Feeling emotional and nervous or having trouble sleeping and eating can all be normal reactions to stress, but they can have a negative impact on your physical health. Engaging in healthy activities and getting the right care and support can put problems in perspective and help stressful feelings subside in a few days or weeks.

The Florida Department of Health recommends the following tips to help manage your stress:

- **Follow a normal routine as much as possible.** Wake up and go to sleep at your usual times. Eat meals at regular times. Continue to go to work and school and do activities with friends and family.
- **Take care of yourself.** Do healthy activities, like eating well-balanced meals, getting plenty of rest, and exercising—even a short walk can clear your head and give you energy. If you are having trouble sleeping, do not drink caffeine or alcohol before going to bed and do not watch TV or use your cell phone or computer in bed. Avoid other things that can hurt you, like smoking, drinking alcohol, or using drugs.
- **Talk about your feelings and accept help.** Feeling stress after a traumatic event is normal. Talking to someone about how you are doing and receiving support can make you feel better. Others who have shared your experience may also be struggling and giving them support can also help you.
- **Turn it off and take a break.** Staying up-to-date about a traumatic event can keep you informed, but pictures and stories on television, in newspapers, and on the Internet can increase or bring back your stress. Schedule information breaks. If you are feeling upset when getting the news, turn it off and focus on something you enjoy.
- **Get out and help others.** Volunteer or contribute to your community in other ways. This community support can be connected to the disaster-related needs or to anything else that you care about. Supporting your community can help you and others heal and see that things are going to get better.

Understanding the common emotional responses to extreme events can help you cope effectively with your feelings, thoughts and behaviors and help you feel more in control as you recover from the storm.

The Disaster Distress Helpline offers crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress after a disaster. The number for the helpline is 1-800-985-5990, and it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information about common reactions to a stressful event and healthy coping strategies, visit [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/coping\\_with\\_stress\\_tips.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/coping_with_stress_tips.html)

Click here to [download](#) a flyer regarding stress management.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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