

Disaster Stress and How to Deal with It



Normal Responses and Needs of Survivors of a Disaster

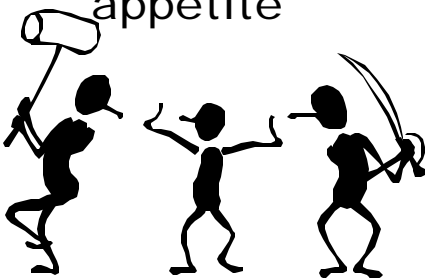
- ◆ 1. Basic Survival Needs
- ◆ 2. Grief over loss of loved ones and/or prized possessions
- ◆ 3. Separation anxiety and fears for safety of significant others
- ◆ 4. Regressive behavior (for example: thumb sucking in children)
- ◆ 5. Relocation and isolation anxieties
- ◆ 6. Need to express thought and feelings about having experienced the disaster
- ◆ 7. Need to feel part of the community and its rebuilding process
- ◆ 8. Altruism and the desire to help others cope and rebuild their lives



Possible Reactions to a Disaster

◆ Behavioral Reactions to a Disaster

- ◆ Isolation from others
- ◆ Problems with sleep
- ◆ Increased conflicts with family or others
- ◆ Jumpiness, startle reactions
- ◆ Avoiding reminders of the disaster
- ◆ Crying easily
- ◆ Increase or decrease in appetite

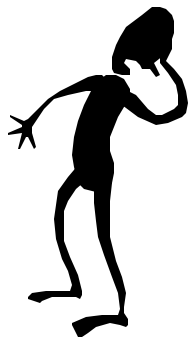
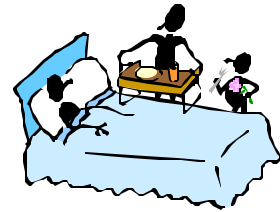


◆ Physical Reactions to a Disaster

- ◆ Worsening or development of medical problems
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Hot or cold sensations in the body
- ◆ Pounding heart, high blood pressure
- ◆ Gastrointestinal distress
- ◆ Worsening of psychiatric illnesses
- ◆ Accelerated physical decline
- ◆ Fatigue or exhaustion

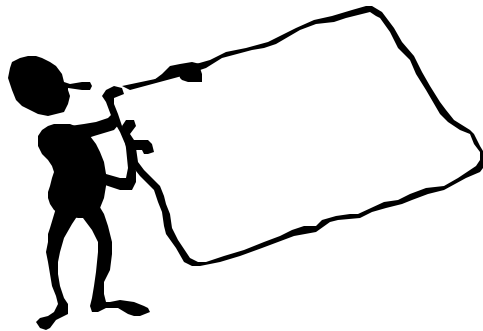
Emotional Responses to Disasters

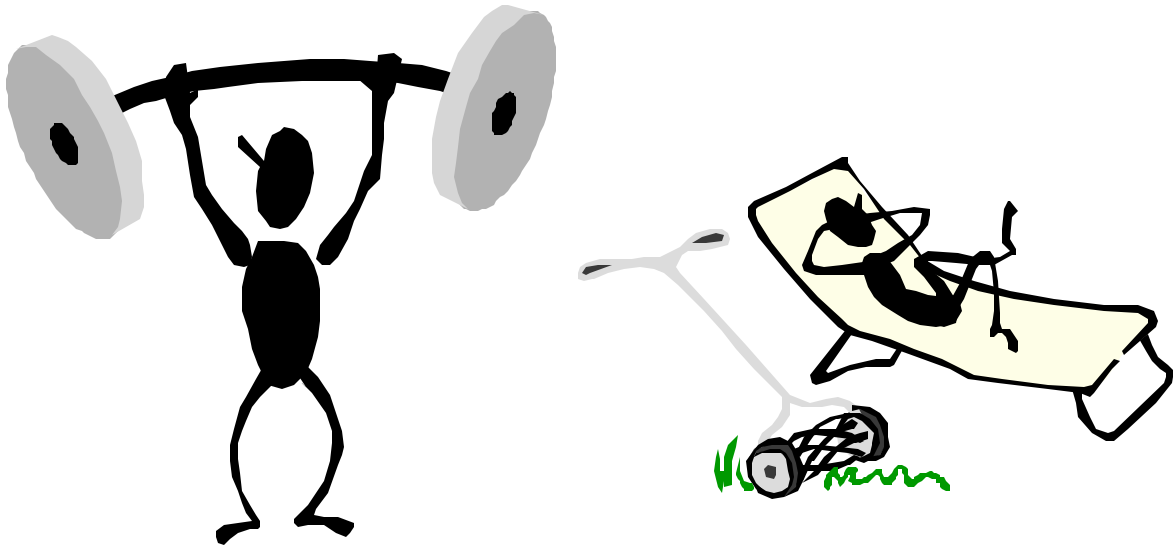
- ◆ Psychosomatic difficulties
- ◆ Loss-bereavement - grief
- ◆ Social Stresses
- ◆ Irritability, frustration anger
- ◆ Guilt, regret



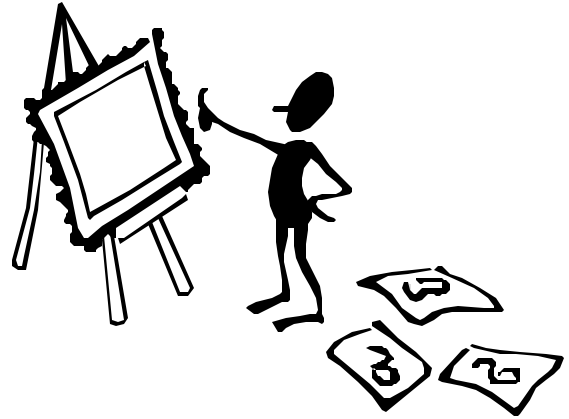
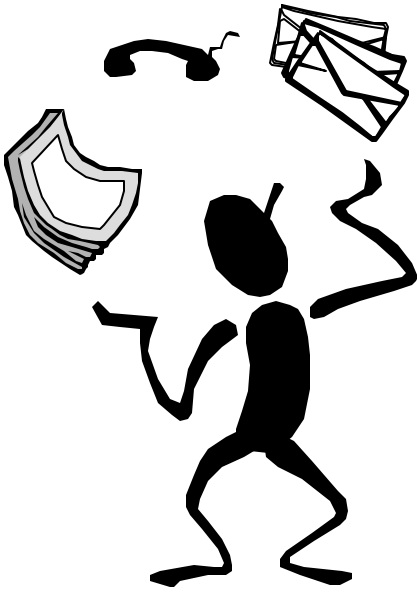
Coping with Stress Following a Disaster

People can take steps to help themselves, family members, co-workers and each other cope with stress following a disaster. This is a list of suggestions.





1. Periods of strenuous physical exercise alternated with periods of relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions to a stressful situation.



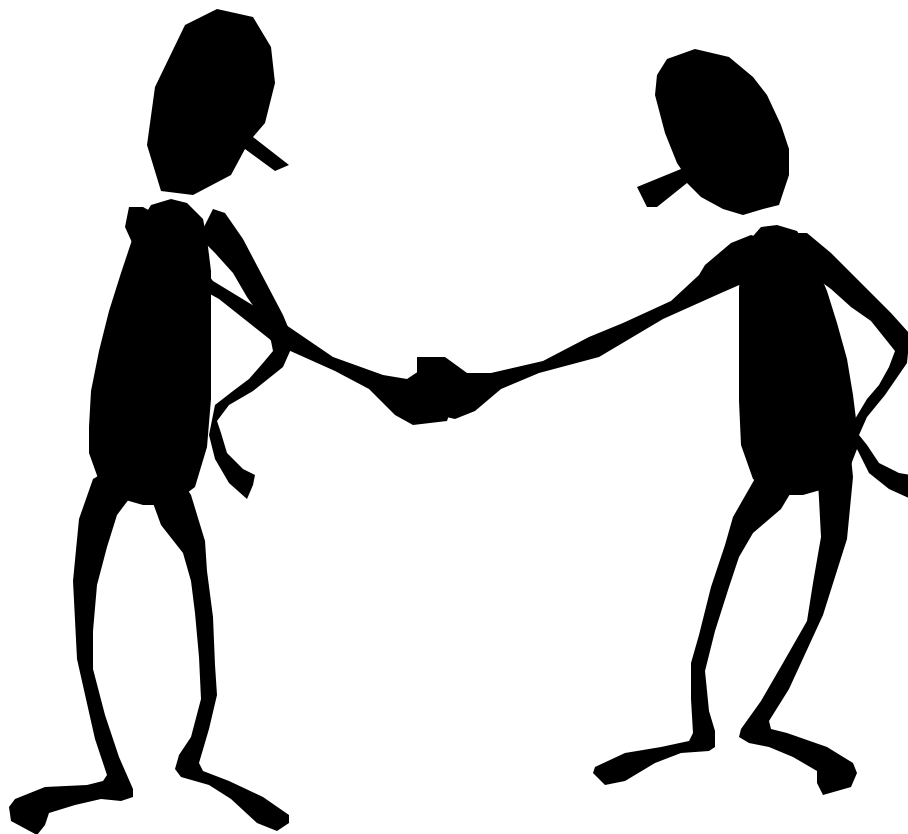
2. Structure your time by keeping busy.



3. Remind yourself that you are normal and having normal reactions. Don't label yourself as "crazy", "wacko", "weak" or unfit!



4. Talk is one of the most healing medicines. Talk to people you know care about you. People do care.



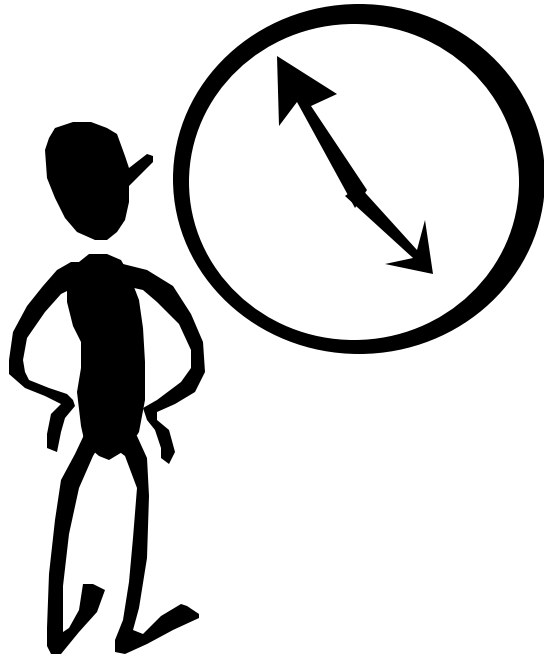
5. Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol or gambling. Don't complicate things further with substance abuse or gambling addictions





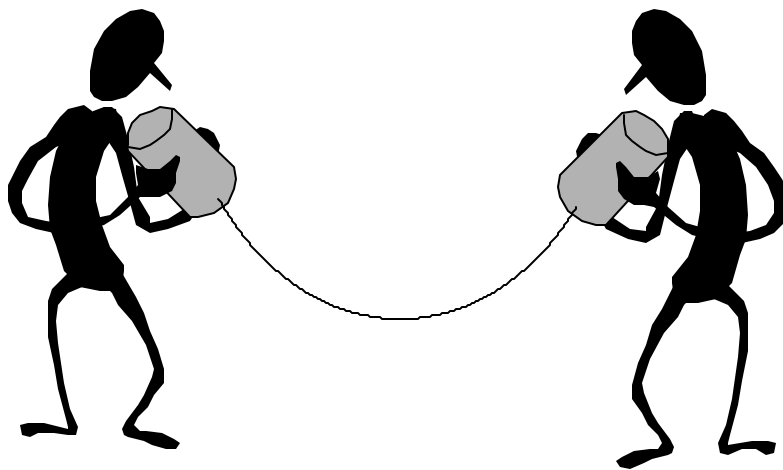
6. Keep your life as normal as possible.





7. It's all right to spend time by yourself.

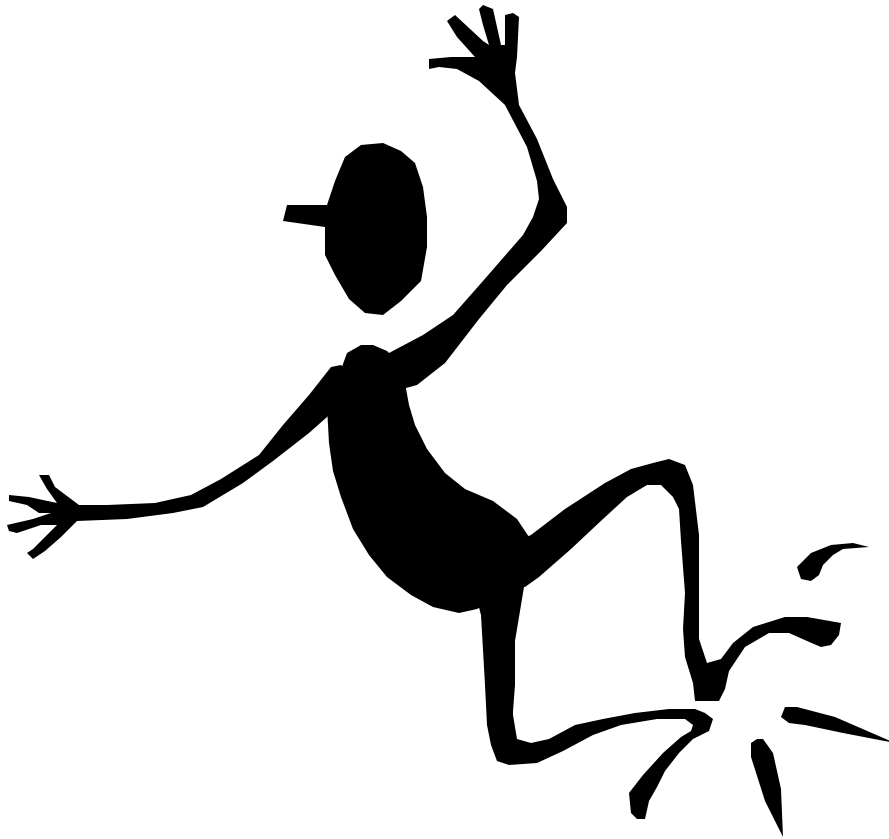




8. Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they're doing. (Respect their feelings if they do not wish to talk about the incident.)



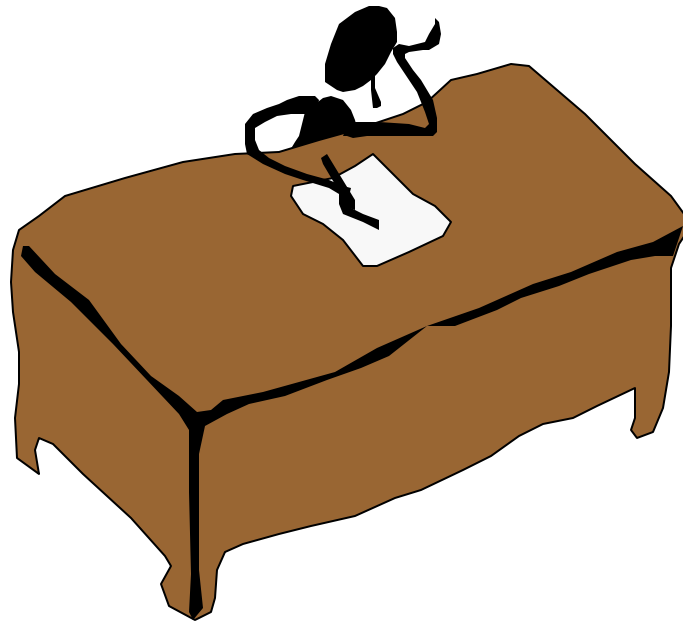
9. Do things that make you feel
GOOD!



10. Realize that those around you are under stress and may not act or react in a manner you would normally expect.

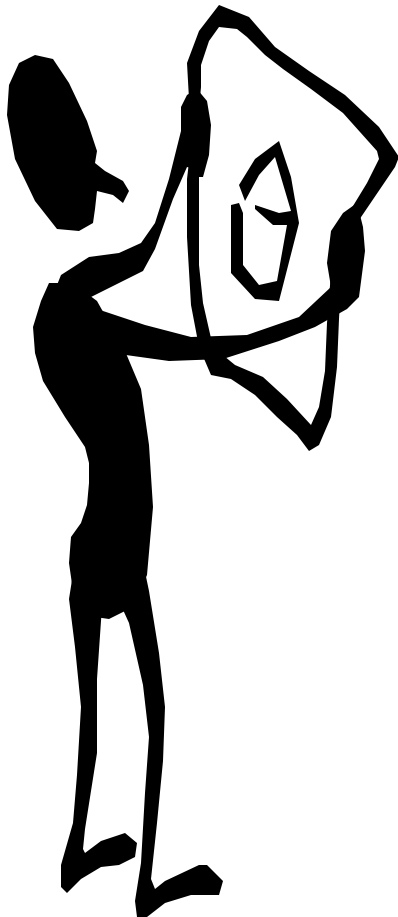
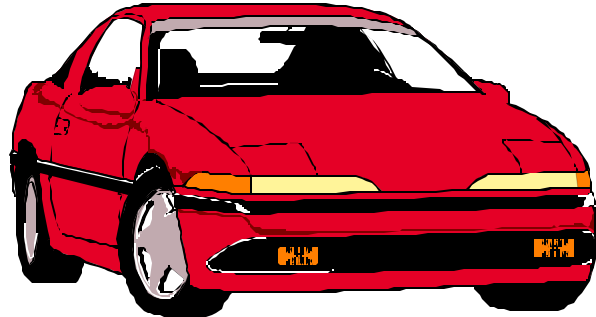


11. Keep a journal. Writing during sleepless hours or when feeling overwhelmed may help.

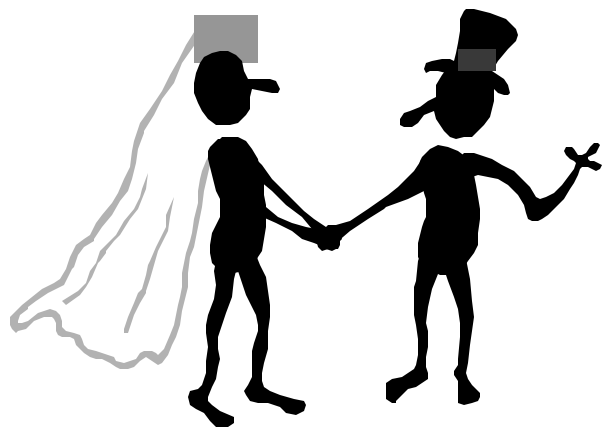


12. DON'T MAKE ANY MAJOR LIFE CHANGES!

Like buying that Ferrari or house you've always wanted



or going to Reno to get married suddenly.



13. Do make as many usual daily decisions as possible. This will give you the feeling of control over your life.



14. Consult a mental health professional if you need assistance or if you are concerned about a family member, friend or co-worker. Crisis phone lines are available 24 hours a day in each county in Minnesota. The number in your county is _____.

