

COPING WITH STRESS

Anyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it, and during the days and weeks afterward, strong and varied emotional reactions are natural. You may experience different signs of stress, fear, or anxiety, which may include:

- Sleeplessness or excessive sleeping
- Trouble eating
- Hyperactivity or lethargy
- Mild depression
- Trouble paying attention

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.

Sometimes, 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.
- Exhibit depressive symptoms for an extended time.
- Think about suicide.

Coping with Stress

Give yourself time to adjust, but if your symptoms persist for an extended period of time, seek help from family, friends, or mental health professionals.

Emotional support from family members, neighbors, and local mental health professionals can help to prevent more serious stress-related problems in the difficult months ahead.

Helpful Steps After the Disaster

- Follow a normal routine as much as possible.
- Eat healthy meals—try not to skip meals or overeat.
- Exercise and stay active.
- Help others in your community and stay busy.
- Accept help from family and friends, coworkers, or clergy.
- Limit your time around the sights and sounds of what happened—try not to dwell on the TV, radio, or newspaper reports.
- Be alert to physical and emotional exhaustion or strain.
- Set priorities for cleanup tasks and pace the work.



For more information, contact CCHD's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program at 452-0881 x310 or visit www.cchdmt.org or www.cdc.gov.