



Building a Healthy Boston

After a Disaster: Self-Care Tips for Dealing with Stress

From the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
US Department of Health and Human Services

Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Disaster Events

- No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
- It is normal to feel anxious about you and your family's safety.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Focusing on our strengths and abilities will help you to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.
- It is common to want to strike back at people who have caused great pain. However, nothing good is accomplished by hateful language or actions.

Signs that Adults Need Stress Management Assistance

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms.

- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood-swings
- Crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings— anger, sorrow, and other emotions-- even though it may be difficult.
- Don't hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated because you feel that you cannot help directly in the rescue work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life patterns or by adjusting them. This healthy outlook will help yourself and your family. (i.e. healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, meditation.)
- Maintain a normal household and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities of yourself and your family.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials, rituals, and use of symbols as a way to express feelings.
- Use existing supports groups of family, friends, and church.
- Establish a family emergency plan. Feeling that there is something that you can do can be very comforting.

When to Seek Help: If self help strategies are not helping or you find that you are using drugs/alcohol in order to cope, you may wish to seek outside or professional assistance with your stress symptoms. If you need help to find a mental health clinician in Boston, you may call the Mayor's Health Line at 617-534-5050/Toll-Free: 1-800-847-0710.