

Resilience and Disaster Recovery

EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF DISASTER

- It is normal to experience emotional reactions to a disaster which can linger for a long time, even without a person recognizing where the distress comes from
- Emotional effects tend to be stronger if the disaster has caused loss or damage to property, physical injury, or perceived threat to one's life
- Normally, emotional effects of a disaster improve over time; it may take longer if cleanup and rebuilding are difficult or prolonged, or other stressful life circumstances occur during the recovery process

TIPS FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from a disaster. Both children and adults can develop resilience skills. Here are some tips to build resilience during disaster recovery:

Connect with others

- Talk about your feelings and share your concerns with someone you trust
- Reach out and offer help to someone else; accept help that is offered to you
- Engage in social activities; spend time with others who share common interests

Foster an optimistic outlook

- View change as a challenge or opportunity; think about how the future might be better
- Review your priorities; abandon unreachable goals and adopt new ones
- Be confident in your abilities; recall how you have successfully faced adversity in the past

Act purposefully

- Develop realistic goals; take small steps toward those goals each day
- Avoid moping; focus on actively coping with disaster-related distress
- Take good care of your body; eat nutritious meals and get adequate rest

WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP

Here are some problematic emotional effects, any of which suggest professional help is needed:

- Persistent sad mood or loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Uncontrollable anger or violence toward another person
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Extreme anxiety or uncontrollable worry
- Thoughts about suicide

Mental health resources: Call FirstLink 701-235-7335 (Cass and Clay counties) or call **2-1-1** for Information, Referral or Crisis Management Services. These numbers are FREE, confidential, 24/7 and also available for supportive listening.

Spiritual resources: Contact your own faith community clergy/support staff for guidance.

Resilience resources: For more information about building resilience, go to www.apahelpcenter.org and www.liveyourlifewell.org.

This information is provided by the Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing Committee of the Red River Recovery Group, and can be copied and distributed freely (September, 2009).