



Managing a Healthy State of Mind and Body Information for Disaster Responders

- No one exposed to disasters and other traumatic events remains untouched by them.
- Working as a responder during the early aftermath of disasters is inevitably stressful.
- Most people exposed to a traumatic event can show signs and symptoms of stress.
- These reactions can be considered normal reactions to abnormal situations and will disappear in a few weeks.
- Although the work of a responder is personally rewarding, the long hours, ambiguous roles, and exposure to human suffering can adversely affect even those that are most experienced.
- There are simple steps that you can take to minimize the stress of your work and maintain your health and well being while on assignment. Being mentally and emotionally prepared is the best way to reduce stress. Also you can improve your ability to cope by being aware of certain signs that indicate you may need assistance with stress management assistance and by learning how to take care of yourself.

Signs that may indicate a need for stress management assistance

- Difficulty maintaining a balanced lifestyle
- Difficulty making decisions
- Disorientation and confusion
- Limited attention span
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering instructions
- Inability to engage in problem solving
- Inability to relax and unwind when off duty
- Refusal to leave
- Refusal to follow orders
- Irritability and frustration
- Unusual argumentativeness
- Unnecessary risk taking
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol/smoking
- Tunnel vision/ muffled hearing

If you need help

Should you or any one you know need help to cope with stressful events, contact 1800 LifeNet a 24 hour, 7-days-a-week crisis hotline. LifeNet staff are mental health professionals who speak a variety of languages: English 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638); Spanish 1-877-AYUDESE (1-877-298-3373); Asian 1-877-990-8585, Deaf/Hearing Impaired (TTY): 1-212-982-5284. You can also visit their Website at www.mhaofnyc.org



Self Care Tips for Disaster Responders

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

- Get enough sleep, and rest
- Eat healthy, regular meals and avoid junk food
- Exercise
- Avoid excessive drinking, smoking and drugs

MANAGE YOUR WORK LOAD

- Maintain a healthy balance between your work and the rest of your life
- Prioritize tasks and be aware of high stress tasks
- Plan and take adequate breaks
- Take time away from assignments

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- Learn about normal and abnormal stress reactions
- Know when to seek help
- Give yourself permission and time to react to the disaster
- Do things that you find relaxing

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPIRITUAL NEEDS

- Make time for reflection
- Find spiritual connection or community
- Meditate
- Pray
- Be open to inspiration

REMAIN ACTIVE

- Maintain your normal daily routine as much as possible

INCREASE YOUR RESILIENCY

- Recall how you coped successfully with difficult times in the past
- Do something that will help you to regain a sense of control
- Focus on your strengths

REDUCE YOUR STRESS

- Reduce your tension: meditate, exercise, listen to music, take a bath
- Stay in contact with people whose company you enjoy
- Engage in activities that comfort you
- Overcome obstacles by setting small realistic goals

REACH OUT

- Talk to your friends, colleagues, relatives, a spiritual leader
- Do not be afraid to express your feelings
- If you feel overwhelmed reach out, ask for help
- Accept support, people do care
- Learn the best ways to cope with stress