

## Coping With Disaster



## HELPING TEENS HEAL

After a natural disaster or other traumatic experience, life might seem out of control. How do you manage? What are you supposed to do?

There is no right or wrong way to respond to a trauma. You might experience:

- A “me first” reaction— in a crisis it is natural to think of yourself first; this normal reaction is nothing to be ashamed of.
- Flashbacks— re-experiencing the disaster.
- Insecurity— your daily routine is disrupted and you don’t feel safe anywhere.
- Role reversal— you might find yourself having to care for the people who usually take care of you.
- Anxiety and moodiness— feeling out of sorts without knowing why.
- A “blank-out” about the event.

Physical symptoms sometimes include:

- Headaches
- Stomach disorders
- Bowel or bladder complaints
- Skin rash
- Abnormal periods

### Learning To Cope

A lesson to learn from a disaster is that you can manage. Eventually you’ll get through the bad experience and move on with your life. The trauma will become a part of your life’s experiences, and the overwhelming feelings will fade. Some coping tactics include:

- **Ignore it.** Sometimes it can help temporarily to pretend it didn’t happen, avoid what reminds you of the event, and keep going.
- **Speak out.** Talk to your friends and share experiences.
- **Be aware of your emotions.** You might feel a need to be closer to your parents. You might feel anger at people who had nothing to do with the event. This is normal.

### Healing The Scars

- **Help others.** Sometimes the best thing to do to relieve our minds is to help others. Teachers, counselors, churches, clubs, and community agencies can organize rebuilding efforts, and can set up opportunities for group discussions about the disaster. You can get involved in community activities to help others begin to help themselves.
- **Talk it out.** Express your feelings with friends, family, even professional counselors.
- **Laugh.** Even a laugh with the dark edges that come from pain or loss can be very therapeutic.
- **Put it in perspective.** You survived, and you still have much to look forward to.
- **Be prepared.** It can help relieve your anxiety to do as much as possible to prepare for the next disaster.
- **Give yourself time to grieve** over your loss and to heal. You will emerge a stronger, more mature individual.

### Need To Talk?

To talk with someone, or for more information about coping with the stress created by trauma, contact:

- Your church or synagogue leader
- Teachers
- School psychologists or counselors
- Community clubs, such as the Boys or Girls Clubs
- Project REBOUND Hotline: 1-800-854-7771

### Project REBOUND

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