

A Social Work and Mental Health Perspective on Post-tornado Relief Efforts with Survivors

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Effects of Disasters

- **Disasters can have a profound impact on individuals, communities, and society at large**
- **Some of the effects of disasters include:**
 - **Loss of life**
 - **Injury**
 - **Trauma**

Effects of Disasters

- **Disruption of services**
- **Fear and panic**
- **Economic vulnerability**
- **Destruction**
- **Limited or no food, clothing, shelter access**
- **Damage to systems of communication**

Crisis and Basic Human Needs

- **Our Seven Basic Attachments**
 1. **Food, oxygen, and other necessities for living**
 2. **Sense of personal identity**
 3. **One or more mutually supportive relationships**
 4. **Being a part of at least one group that accepts us as a member**

Crisis and Basic Human Needs

5. **One or more roles in which we feel self-respect and which we can perform with dignity**
6. **Financial and material security**
7. **A comprehensive system of meaning or set of values**
 - **Including a wholesome spirituality**

– From Hansell, N. (1976). *The person in distress*.
New York: Human Sciences Press

Post-Trauma Reactions

- Normal reactions to abnormal event
- Event may be re-experienced
 - Triggered by associated stimuli
- Will decrease in intensity and frequency over time

Characteristics of Crisis

- There is often a triggering event
- A belief of danger, loss, or threat of harm exists
- The meaning individuals assign to the event, and its expected impact on the future is vitally important for human service professionals to address

Characteristics of Crisis

- Every crisis provides an opportunity to either re-establish at a new level of growth, or decline in that person's historical functioning

Phases of Crisis

- According to Gerald Caplan, crisis and anxiety evolve in four distinct phases

Phase One

- A traumatic event causes an initial rise in tension
 - In turn, an individual uses familiar coping mechanisms to reduce or eliminate their stress and discomfort

Phase Two

- A person's normal problem-solving abilities fail, and tension continues to increase
 - The possibility of a crisis state increases in this phase, but it is not inevitable

Phase Three

- **Anxiety continues to mount, causing the individual to use every available resource, including new and unusual problem-solving techniques**

Phase Four

- **This is the state of active crisis that results when:**
 - **Internal strength and social support are lacking**
 - **The person's problem remains unsolved**
 - **Tension and anxiety become unbearable**

Possible Outcomes

- **Substance abuse/misuse**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Homelessness**
- **Criminal activity**
- **Child abuse**

Physical Effects of Unresolved Stress

- **Nausea**
- **Tics and tremors**
- **Increased blood pressure**
- **Heart racing**
- **Headaches**

Emotional Effects of Unresolved Stress

- **Anger**
- **Irritability**
- **Sorrow**
- **Anxiety**
- **Uncontrolled crying**

Behavioral Effects of Unresolved Stress

- **Impulsive behaviors**
- **Pacing**
- **Withdrawal and isolation**
- **Explosive episodes**
- **Depression**

Cognitive Effects of Unresolved Stress

- Confusion
- Lack of concentration
- Indecisiveness
- Forgetfulness

Learned Behavior for Dealing with Stress

- Social support
- Going out with friends
- Stuff your emotions:
 - Eat, don't cope

Grief: A Neglected and Misunderstood Process

- Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior
- The major loss event need not always result in death
- It is possible to feel better, and feeling bad is not a weakness

Grief: A Neglected and Misunderstood Process

- Recovery from loss comes through a series of small and correct choices made by the griever

What are STERBs?

- Short-Term Energy Relieving Behaviors
 - Food
 - Sex
 - Alcohol/drugs
 - Shopping
 - Anger
 - Workaholism
 - Exercise
 - Fantasy

It Is Ok to Ask for Support

- Faith group
 - Church, Mosque, Kingdom Hall, Temple
- Family and friends
 - Don't isolate
- Facebook and other social media
- Formal and informal support groups

Prevention-Personal

- **BE AWARE** of limitations and needs
- Recognize when you are:
 - Hungry
 - Angry
 - Lonely
 - Tired
- Practice self-care

10 Ways to Reduce Stress and Revitalize Your Life (WebMD)

1 - Shake the Salt Habit

- Feeling bloated? Salt may be partly to blame
 - Too much salt can cause you to retain water
 - Contributes to high blood pressure

1 - Shake the Salt Habit

- Cut back on salt by choosing fresh (not canned or processed) foods and experimenting with other seasonings such as curry powder, garlic, cumin, or rosemary to give your food some zing
 - You'll expand your culinary horizons and feel more energetic, too

2 - Stressed? Climb the Stairs

- When you're angry or stressed, it's easy to grab a candy bar, smoke a cigarette, or gulp another cup of coffee to cope

2 - Stressed? Climb the Stairs

- The ideal antidote? Exercise
 - Next time you're stressed out or riled up, climb a flight of stairs (or two) or go for a quick stroll -- studies show even 10 minutes of exercise can provide a mental boost

3 - Put Down that Doughnut

- In tense times, you may choose comfort foods over fruits and vegetables
 - When that rush from refined carbs or sugary food crashes, you'll be left feeling sluggish

3 - Put Down that Doughnut

- Extra calories can quickly add up to extra pounds -- increasing your risk for health problems
- Try munching on an apple or just take 10 deep breaths instead

4 - Get Your Beauty Sleep

- Experts recommend 7 - 8 hours of sleep a night to recharge and lower stress
- Having trouble falling asleep?
 - Don't drink caffeine past noon
 - Avoid exercise two hours before bedtime

4 - Get Your Beauty Sleep

- Make your bedroom a sleep-only zone -- no TVs, computers, or other distractions
- If these tips don't work, talk to your doctor

5 - Get Out of that Rut

- Mixing it up, whether by altering your routine or trying something new -- like changing your hairstyle -- can improve your outlook and mood
- Driving a new route to work, walking the dog down a different street, or eating a new food for breakfast can help keep things fresh

5 - Get Out of that Rut

- Focus on one easy-to-accomplish change at a time to ensure success

6 - Walk Around the Block

- You don't have to spend hours at the gym -- even a little movement can get you in touch with your body and help you regain your energy
- A simple walk around the block can clear your head, and exercises that involve a bit of meditation -- such as yoga or tai chi -- can help recharge both your body and your mind

7 - Eat More Fiber

- Fiber can help you feel fuller faster so you eat less and lose weight
- Getting enough fiber also keeps you regular and is good for your heart
- Fiber comes in many tasty forms, from oatmeal and whole-grain breads and cereals to fruits such as apples, citrus, and strawberries, and almost any vegetable

8 - Focus on the Present

- Being aware of where you are and what is happening right now -- some call it mindfulness -- can help you relax instead of fretting over what's looming on the horizon

8 - Focus on the Present

- Let go of thoughts about the past or future, and focus on the present moment
 - How does the air feel against your skin?
 - How does the pavement feel under your feet?
 - If your mind wanders, just bring it back again to focus on the present

9 - Call the Doctor

- Ongoing health problems can sap vitality
- Resolve to get your symptoms checked out by a physician
- If you haven't had a physical in a while, schedule one now
 - If you feel mental health care is in order, discuss that with your doctor, too

10 - Feed Your Head

- Sometimes the answer to having a lot on your mind is to do something that takes your brain in a completely different direction
 - Stretch your mental boundaries by listening to a lecture on your iPod, doing a crossword puzzle, or joining a book club and checking out the latest best seller

10 - Feed Your Head

– Take up a new hobby that keeps you active mentally and physically, whether it's gardening or hiking

Resources

National Mental Health Information Center

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/katrina/pub_respond.asp

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

www.ncptsd.org

Resources

Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Test

www.isu.edu/~bhstamm/tests/satfat.htm



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Suicidepreventionlifeline.org

The Grief Recovery Method®

1-800-334-7606

www.griefrecoverymethod.com

Grief Recovery®
The Action Program For Moving Beyond Loss

Have A Great Day!

- Stress needs an outlet

*When you don't find a healthy one,
an unhealthy one will
most often find you!*

