

Hurricane Recovery: Disaster Behavioral Health

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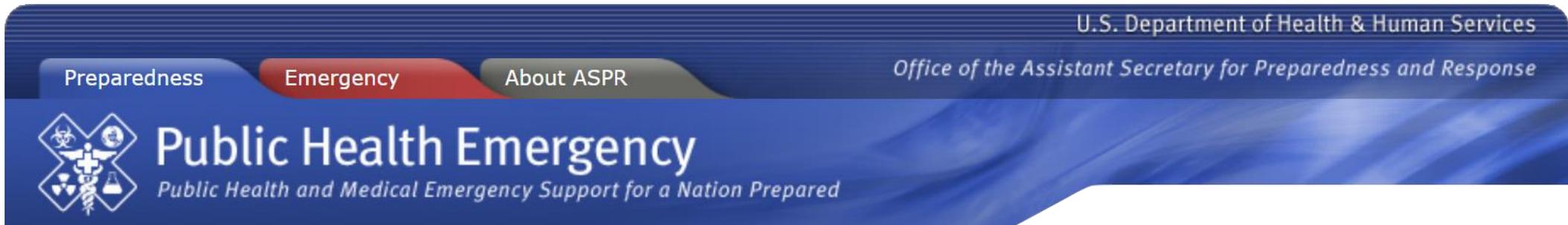
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Overview

- Defining disaster behavioral health
- Common disaster reactions
- Coping with grief
- When to seek help
- Resources



Disaster Behavioral Health (DBH)



“DBH addresses the psychological, emotional, cognitive, developmental, and social impacts that disasters have on survivors and responders as they respond and recover.”

— Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response,
<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/DBH-federal.aspx>

The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program

- Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and administered by FEMA and SAMHSA.
- Provides grants to states, territories, and federally recognized tribes to help address disaster behavioral health needs.
- Supports the following services:
 - Individual and group crisis counseling
 - Basic supportive or educational contact
 - Community networking and support
 - Assessment, referrals, and linkage to resources
 - Materials development and communications

Common Reactions to Disasters

- Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it in some way.
- People who have survived disasters often experience some common physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral reactions.



**Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event:
MANAGING STRESS**

Important Things To Know About Disasters and Other Traumatic Events

If you were involved in a disaster such as a hurricane, flood, or even terrorism, or another traumatic event like a car crash, you may be affected personally regardless of whether you were hurt or lost a loved one. You can be affected just by witnessing a disaster or other traumatic event. It is common to show signs of stress after exposure to a disaster or other traumatic event, and it is important to monitor your physical and emotional health.

Possible Reactions to a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event

Try to identify your early warning signs of stress. Stress usually shows up in the four areas shown below, but everyone should check for ANY unusual stress responses after a disaster or other traumatic event. Below are some of the most common reactions.

YOU MAY FEEL EMOTIONALLY:	YOU MAY HAVE PHYSICAL REACTIONS, SUCH AS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxious or fearful• Overwhelmed by sadness• Angry, especially if the event involved violence• Guilty, even when you had no control over the traumatic event• Heroic, like you can do anything• Like you have too much energy or no energy at all• Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone• Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having stomachaches or diarrhea• Having headaches or other physical pains for no clear reason• Eating too much or too little• Sweating or having chills• Getting tremors (shaking) or muscle twitches• Being jumpy or easily startled

Tell Free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4776) | info@samhsa.hhs.gov | <http://store.samhsa.gov> 1

Related resource: *Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Managing Stress,*
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-of-a-Disaster-or-Other-Traumatic-Event-Managing-Stress/SMA13-4776>

Common Reactions to Disasters (cont.)

Physical

- Digestive problems
- Aches and pains without a clear physical cause
- Increase in appetite, or loss of appetite
- Sweating or chills (in someone who is not sick)
- Jumpiness, startling easily
- Trouble sleeping

Cognitive

- Trouble remembering things
- Trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Confusion
- Increased worry
- Difficulty with making decisions

Emotional

- Anxiety or fear
- Overwhelming sadness
- Anger
- Disconnection, lack of caring
- Numbness, inability to feel joy or sadness

Behavioral

- Trouble sleeping, or trouble relaxing
- An increase or decrease in energy and activity levels
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or prescription medication to try to cope
- Outbursts of anger
- Trouble accepting help or helping others
- Self-isolation

Common Reactions in Children

- Children and teens have many of the same reactions as adults.
- Reactions vary by age.



Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event:
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND TEACHERS

Adult support and reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time.

Children and youth can face emotional strains after a traumatic event such as a car crash or violence.¹ Disasters also may leave them with long-lasting harmful effects.² When children experience a trauma, watch it on TV, or overhear others discussing it, they can feel scared, confused, or anxious. Young people react to trauma differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. As such, adults do not always know when a child needs help coping. This tip sheet will help parents, caregivers, and teachers learn some common reactions, respond in a helpful way, and know when to seek support.

Possible Reactions to a Disaster or Traumatic Event

Many of the reactions noted below are normal when children and youth are handling the stress right after an event. If any of these behaviors lasts for more than 2 to 4 weeks, or if they suddenly appear later on, these children may need more help coping. Information about where to find help is in the **Helpful Resources** section of this tip sheet.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0-5 YEARS OLD

Very young children may go back to thumb sucking or wetting the bed at night after a trauma. They may fear strangers, darkness, or monsters. It is fairly common for preschool children to become clingy with a parent, caregiver, or teacher or to want to stay in a place where they feel safe. They may express the trauma repeatedly in their play or tell exaggerated stories about what happened. Some children's eating and sleeping habits may change. They also may have aches and pains that cannot be explained. Other symptoms to watch for are aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience.

- **Infants and Toddlers, 0-2 years old**, cannot understand that a trauma is happening, but they know when their caregiver is upset. They may start to show the same emotions as their caregivers, or they may act differently, like crying for no reason, withdrawing from people, and not playing with their toys.
- **Children, 3-5 years old**, can understand the effects of trauma. They may have trouble adjusting to change and loss. They may depend on the adults around them to help them feel better.

1 Toll-Free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4722) | 2 info@samhsa.hhs.gov | http://store.samhsa.gov

Related resource: *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers*, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Talking-With-and-Helping-Children-and-Youth-Cope-After-a-Disaster-or-Traumatic-Event-A-Guide-for-Parents-Caregivers-and-Teachers/SMA12-4732>

Common Reactions in Children (cont.)

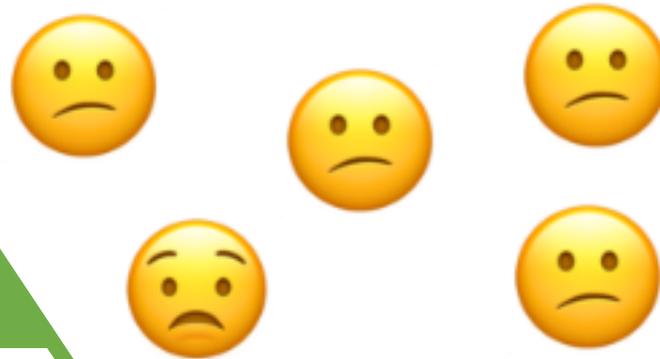
- Increased fear and worry
- Acting out parts of the disaster in play, sometimes again and again
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Complaints of aches and pains without a clear physical cause
- Aggressive behavior and disobedience
- Hyperactivity
- Withdrawal, stopping spending time with friends
- Poor performance at school
- Risk-taking behavior

Disaster-related Stress and Resilience

MANY



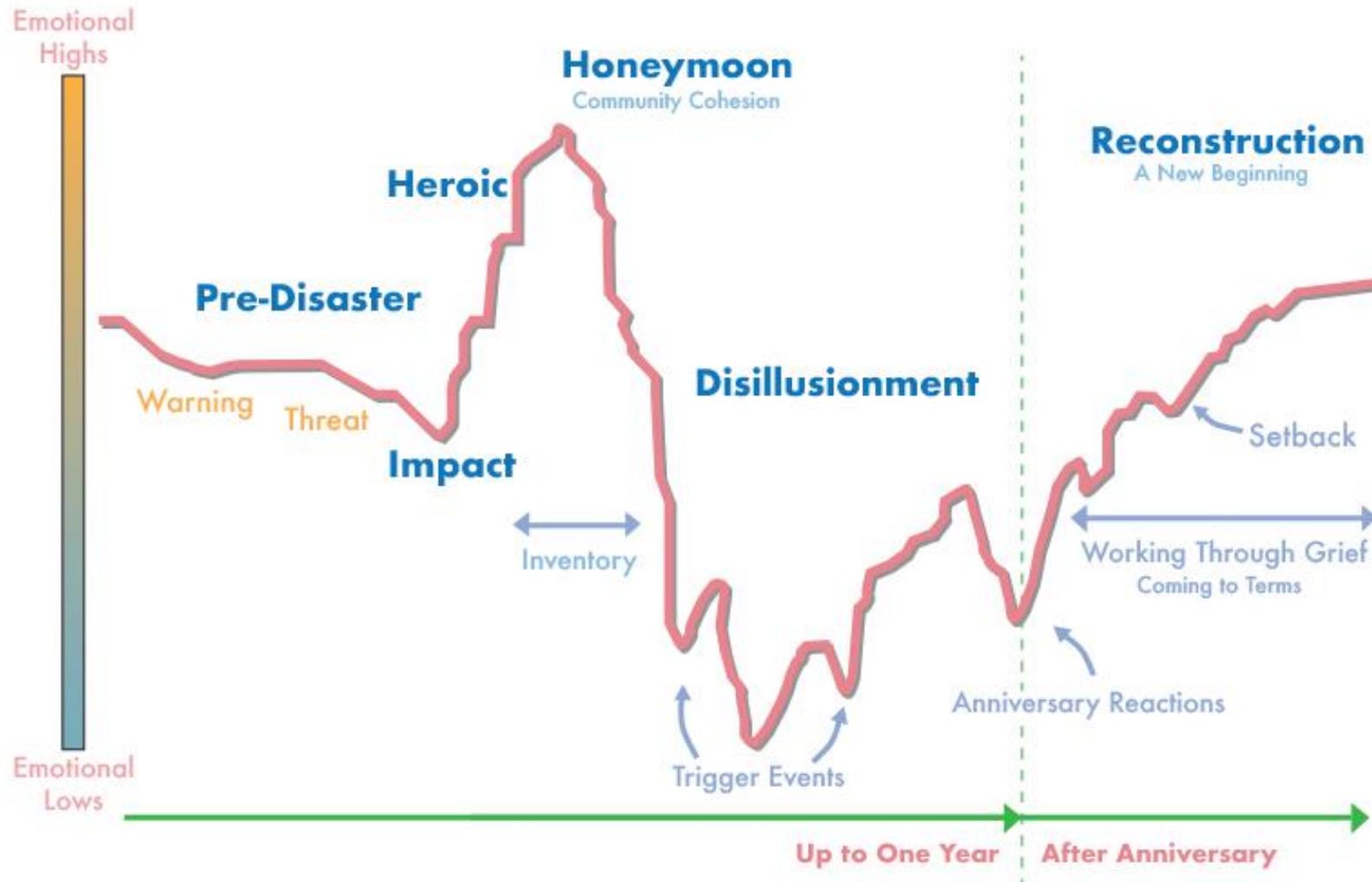
SOME



FEW



Phases of Disaster



Adapted from Zunin & Myers as cited in DeWolfe, D. J. 2000. *Training manual for mental health and human service workers in major disasters* (2nd ed., HHS Publication No. ADM 90-538). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services.

Coping with Grief

- Grief is the normal response of sorrow, heartache, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you.



Related resource: Tips for Survivors: *Coping with grief after a disaster or traumatic event*,
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-/SMA17-5035>

National Hotlines

- The SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline is a national hotline (1-800-985-5990) and SMS (text “TalkWithUs” to 66746) service available to anyone in U.S. states and territories before, during, and after natural and human-caused disasters.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - Toll-free phone: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
 - Website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Disaster Behavioral Health Resources

<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

or

<https://store.samhsa.gov>



Visit bit.ly/disasterapp to learn more.

Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS)

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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Behavioral Health Resources on Zika

Disaster Distress Helpline
1-800-985-5990

Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS) Resource Collections

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) provides various resources and useful information for those in the disaster behavioral health field.

All the resources for which links are provided are in the public domain or have been authorized for noncommercial use. Hardcopies of some materials may be ordered by using the publication numbers cited in bibliographies. If utilized in program materials, stakeholders should acknowledge the source of the materials.

- [Acute Interventions](#)
- [American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal-specific Resources](#)
- [Animals and Disasters](#)
- [Chemical and Biological Events](#)
- [Children and Youth](#)
- [Disaster Apps](#)
- [Disaster Responders](#)
Note: This item replaces the "Public Safety Workers DBHIS"
- [Disaster-related Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Disaster-specific Resources](#)
 - [Drought](#)
 - [Earthquake](#)
 - [Flood](#)
 - [Hurricane](#)
 - [Technological Disaster](#)
 - [Terrorism](#)
 - [Tornado](#)
 - [Tsunami](#)
 - [Wildfire](#)
- [Faith-based Communities and Spiritual Leaders](#)
- [Immediate Disaster Response](#)
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- [Mass Violence/Community Violence](#)
- [Military Personnel and Their Families](#)
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- [Older Adults](#)
- [People With Disabilities and Other Functional and Access](#)

Contact Us

For disaster technical assistance inquiries, contact SAMHSA DTAC at 800-308-3515 or dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov

For people experiencing emotional distress related to a disaster, SAMHSA offers toll-free crisis counseling and support through the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#), 1-800-985-5990.

[Contact SAMHSA](#)

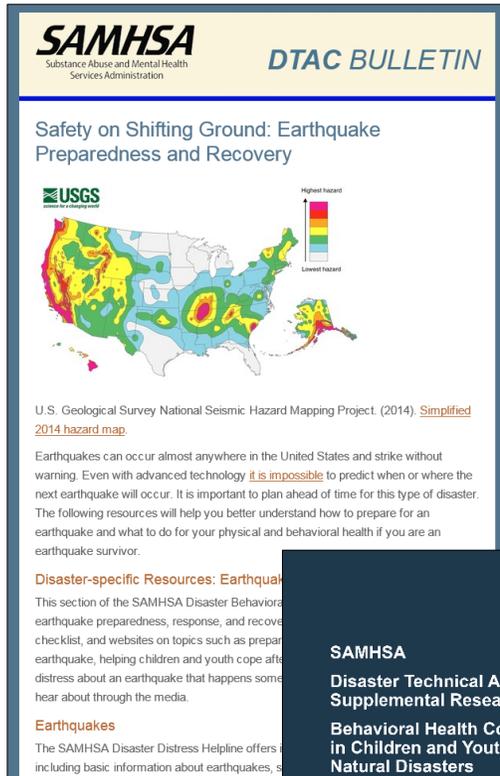
DTAC Bulletins and Newsletters

- [The Dialogue](#): A quarterly newsletter for disaster behavioral health professionals.
- [SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin](#): A monthly e-newsletter with resources, events, and updates from the field.
- [Supplemental Research Bulletin](#): Catch up on the latest findings from the literature.

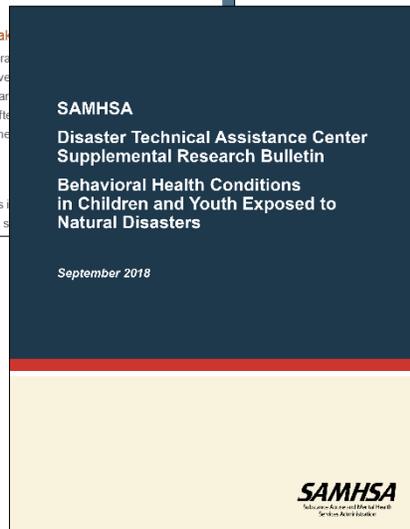
We value your input, please complete a [brief survey](#) about these and other SAMHSA DTAC products.

- [Acute Interventions](#)
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SAMHSA DTAC Newsletters



- ***SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin:*** Monthly e-newsletter with DBH resources
- ***The Dialogue:*** Quarterly journal of articles by DBH professionals
- ***Supplemental Research Bulletin:*** A biannual research summary
- To subscribe, email DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov or enter your email address and select newsletter subscriptions at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USSAMHSA/subscriber/new>.



Disaster Response Template Toolkit

- Printed materials

- Brochures
- Newsletters
- Tip sheets
- Postcards

- Messaging through other media

- Blogs
- Public service announcements
- Websites
- Social media



To access the Disaster Response Template Toolkit, contact SAMHSA DTAC at 1-800-308-3515 or dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov.

SAMHSA DTAC Webinars and Podcasts

- Promising Practices in DBH Planning webinar series
- Resilience podcast series
- Cultural awareness webinars



Available at

<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/webinars-podcasts>.

Thank you.

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

Disaster Technical Assistance Center

dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov

1-800-308-3515

www.samhsa.gov

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