

The emotional toll of hurricanes

Lessons learned from hurricane disasters

America is a nation that is changed by events. Some events move us forward. Others test our courage. Hurricanes test our courage. Living through hurricanes has taught us resiliency. We know we can bounce back from problems. When we help others, we are helping ourselves. Together, we have learned about hope. We learned lessons from past hurricanes. These lessons will help us with future challenges.

- We know the unthinkable is possible. We must plan for it. We know our weaknesses.
- We understand courage. We saw uncommon acts of courage among common people.
- We must support each other. This makes our resilience stronger.
- We must volunteer. Helping others helps the community. And helps us heal. We are responsible to each other.
- We need disaster plans. We have to respond quickly. We are paying attention to disaster training.
- We know that fear is normal. Talking about fears is helpful. It brings strength. Listening to others' fears helps our relationships.

Overcoming your fears

Fear is normal if you are in a hurricane. You can reduce the stress before or after the event. Anxiety can be a feeling of dread. It can be about a real or imagined threat to your well-being. Some anxiety is normal. It can alert you when danger is present. A traumatic event can be overwhelming. The anxiety may get in the way of your daily life. Helpful tips to assist you in getting over your fears:

- Be prepared. Get ready for the hurricane season. This will help reduce fear about it.
- Eat healthy foods. Try to eat at your regular times. Do not skip meals.
- Limit caffeine. Too much caffeine can make you edgy. Drink coffee, tea or sodas without caffeine. Avoid chocolate.
- Avoid tobacco and alcohol. They can cause anxiety.
- Practice relaxation. Sit quietly and breathe slowly and deeply. Try seeing yourself in your favorite place. See yourself as calm and happy.
- Do not over-commit. Lots of people may need help after a hurricane. Trying to do too much all at once can bring on anxiety.
- Keep to your daily routine. Doing routine things is comforting. It can reduce stress.
- Limit TV news viewing. Major events like hurricanes feed news coverage. You do not have to view it constantly. Tune in for updates. But stop watching if it adds to your anxiety. Or that of your family members.
- Keep family members close by. It may make you feel better. Be concerned about your family's safety. Try not to overreact.
- Do something for someone else. Take attention off your own worries. Do something nice for someone.
- Volunteer. Contact area schools or hospitals. Ask volunteer groups how you can help. Take action to be part of the solution. This is a great way to reduce anxiety.
- Talk to someone. If you feel overwhelmed by emotions, talk to:
 - A friend.
 - A family member.
 - A doctor.
 - A religious advisor.
 - A mental health professional.

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