



## Tips for Coping With The Aftermath Of Hurricane Sandy

As life slowly begins to show signs of returning to normal, many people continue to feel the effects of one of the most powerful storms to hit our area in decades. Continued power outages and a shortage of gas have many people feeling anxious and wondering how they will meet their daily responsibilities, including getting to work. We are all familiar with the scenes of devastation that have left many people – our families, our colleagues, our neighbors, and our friends – with tremendous losses.

Whether you are directly affected or not, the impact of this type of disaster affects us all. Understanding normal responses to these abnormal events can assist in coping effectively with your feelings, thoughts and behaviors, and help you along the path to recovery. Keeping the following in mind can be helpful in dealing with the aftermath.

- **People react in different ways to disasters and traumatic events.** There is no “right” or “wrong” way to think, feel, or respond. Some people may respond immediately, while others have delayed reactions. It is important to be tolerant of your own reactions and feelings, as well as the reactions and feelings of others.
- **It is normal to feel a wide range of intense emotions and physical reactions.** Following a traumatic event, it is normal to experience a rollercoaster of emotions. There may be times when you feel jumpy and anxious, and other times when you may feel disconnected and numb. Acknowledge and accept your feelings. Allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling without judgment. Give yourself time to adjust. Some common emotional responses to traumatic events include: shock and disbelief, fear, sadness, helplessness, guilt, anger, and shame. It is also common to feel relief that the worst is over, and even hopeful that life will return to normal.
- **Children react differently to crisis than adults.** Often following a disaster or traumatic event, children need extra reassurance and support. Do your best to create an environment where your children/students feel safe to communicate what they are feeling, and to ask questions. Provide ongoing opportunities to talk about what they went through or what they are seeing on television. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell them so. Watch for physical signs of stress, which may appear as physical complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, or sleep disturbances.
- **Excessive exposure to media coverage of the storm and its aftermath may be further traumatizing.** While some people regain a sense of control by watching media coverage of the event or observing the recovery effort, others find the reminders upsetting. Take a break from watching the news. Watching endless replays of footage from the disasters can make your stress level even greater.

- **Taking even small steps towards restoring safety and comfort can make a big difference.** Being proactive about your own and your family's situation and well-being will assist in feeling less powerless and vulnerable. Focus on anything that helps you feel more calm, centered, and in control. **Reestablish a routine** – getting back as much as possible to your normal routine will help to reduce traumatic stress. Even if your work or school routine is disrupted, you can structure your day with regular times for eating, sleeping, spending time with family, and relaxing.
- **Make stress reduction a priority.** Almost everyone experiences signs of stress after going through a traumatic event. While a certain amount of stress is normal, and even helpful, as you face the challenges that come in the aftermath of a disaster, traumatic stress can take a heavy toll on your mental and physical health. Making time for rest and relaxation will help bring your brain and body back into balance. Relaxing activities such as meditating, taking a bath, or listening to soothing music can help to reduce stress levels, as well as scheduling time for activities that bring you joy – a favorite hobby or watching an uplifting or funny movie.
- **Getting quality rest is essential.** After experiencing a traumatic event, worries and fears may disrupt your sleep, which places considerable stress on your mind and body, and makes it more difficult to maintain emotional balance. Try to go to sleep and get up the same time each day. Avoid caffeine in the afternoon or evening. Get regular exercise, but not too close to bedtime. Do something relaxing before going to sleep.
- **Seek support.** Support from other people is vital to recovery from traumatic stress. Take advantage of existing support groups – family, friends, colleagues, and community organizations. Communicate your experiences in whatever ways feel comfortable to you. Talk to a professional to explore mechanisms to cope effectively with the aftermath of the storm. **Contact your EAP. We are here for you and your family!**

1741 North Ocean Ave. Medford, NY 11763 (631)289-0480  
35 Crooked Hill Road, Suite 103, Commack, NY 11725 (631)858-9177  
188 W. Montauk Hwy, Suite E1, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (631)728-2008

[www.esboces.org/EAP](http://www.esboces.org/EAP)