



## Be Prepared

When you have no control over a stressful situation, you still have control over how you understand and respond to it. Having a plan can help you stay calm and feel more in control. This can help you make better choices during a disaster or emergency.

Here is a checklist to help prepare your family:

- Make an emergency kit. Include food that won't spoil and clean water to drink, enough for everyone in the family (even your pets). A good emergency kit can help you and your family survive for up to 72 hours.
- Have a list of emergency contact phone numbers ready. When you're under stress, you might not remember phone numbers. Choose a friend or family member from out of the province to be your main contact in case you get separated from your family. Make sure everyone in your family knows who to contact and where to meet if you're separated.
- Keep a copy of important papers and a contact list with your emergency kit. It's a good idea to have a copy for you and each family member.
- In a crisis, it's important to communicate. Make a plan to communicate any special needs (e.g., medical conditions or supplies) for you or family members. Write this information down and keep a copy with you. Share your plan with friends.



## Preparing Emotionally for Disasters or Emergencies

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**811**

Mental Health Help Line  
**1-877-303-2642**  
Open 24 hours a day,  
7 days a week

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## How do I start planning?

Imagine that there's an emergency (e.g., fire or flood in your home) and you need to leave your home quickly. What are the best escape routes from your home? Find at least 2 ways out of each room. Write them down—now you've started your emergency plan.

Make sure everyone in your family understands the plan and what they need to do to be safe. Let your children and teens help with planning.

**Know the disaster plan for your area.**

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## Why is it important to be prepared emotionally for disasters or emergencies?

Going through a traumatic event can create a number of losses, which may bring uncertainty and anxiety about the future. Your environment might have changed a lot. Adjusting to new things can be hard.

Being emotionally prepared for a disaster or emergency can help you reduce your stress and anxiety. If you can manage stress every day, it will help you cope during challenging times. It can also help you to recover from trauma faster and with fewer long-term effects.



## How can I take better care of myself?

Taking good care of yourself physically can help you cope well emotionally.

- Eat well-balanced, healthy foods according to Canada's Food Guide. Make sure to eat regular meals. Limit snacks with lots of sugar.
- Manage chronic illness. If you need help, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider.
- Get enough sleep. When you don't get enough sleep, it may affect how you cope with everyday challenges. Sleeping enough is an important way to stay healthy physically and emotionally.
- Drink enough water. Avoid drinks with a lot of caffeine or sugar. Drinking 250 mL (1 cup) of water every 2 hours while awake can help keep you hydrated. Staying hydrated is important for your health and helps you think more clearly.
- Stay active. Exercise can help you cope better. Walking for 15 minutes can be calming. Walking makes the brain release chemicals to help you feel calm and help you deal with stress.

**Taking care of practical details ahead of time can help lower stress during an emergency.**

## How can I build emotional wellness?

Learning about and using healthy coping skills to overcome daily challenges in your life is an important step to maintaining good mental health. It's these same skills that will help you cope better during emergencies.

Here are some basic steps you can follow for emotional wellness:

- Take care of yourself—make time for activities like yoga, deep breathing exercises, meditation, and walking to help lower stress.
- Always look for and make manageable changes in your life that will help you cope better. Even small lifestyle changes can make a big difference.
- Decrease or stop unhealthy coping behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol, eating too much, not eating enough).
- Develop a positive attitude toward life—share 1 positive thing that has happened every day with friends or family.
- Always make time for yourself (e.g., read a good book, listen to your favourite music) no matter how busy life gets. Taking time for yourself can give you the mental energy to better cope with busy schedules.



## How can I build a strong support network?

Strong support networks are essential in life, but especially important during emergencies and disasters. Take time to build and maintain strong support networks in your life.

- Ask for help when you need it. Accepting help from friends and family can help build a supportive community.
- Take part in celebrations and ceremonies to help build community. Include people who are important to you.
- Spend time with supportive family and friends. Spending time with people you like is good for your physical and emotional health.
- Get to know your neighbours. In an emergency or disaster, your neighbours are often the first to respond. Knowing who you can turn to in times of need is important. It's also good to know who might need your help in an emergency.
- One way to get to know your neighbours and your neighbourhood is to volunteer or join your local community association.