Everyone who experiences a disaster or emergency is affected in some way. It’s normal to have symptoms of stress. For some people, these symptoms don’t appear until weeks or months after the event has happened.

Common reactions to a disaster or emergency may include:

- feeling angry or irritable
- trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- feeling anxious, scared, or on edge
- trouble sleeping or staying asleep
- feeling sad or helpless
- muscle tension, headaches, or stomach problems
- questioning life’s purpose or meaning
- feeling guilt or shame

After a disaster or emergency it takes time to grieve, adjust, rebuild, and recover. Many people recover on their own over time. Some people might need extra support to help them recover. It’s important to know when to ask for help.

You may wish to speak to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional if you are experiencing any of the following warning signs:

- having emotional reactions that are getting in the way of relationships, work, or other important activities
- feeling excessive guilt, shame, or blame
- avoiding or withdrawing from others
- feeling excessive anger, sadness, or hopelessness
- increased use of alcohol or drugs
- feeling excessive anxiety, fear, or panic
- feeling confused or disoriented
- thoughts of harming yourself or others

If you’re having suicidal thoughts, go to the nearest emergency department or call 911 right away.

Important Numbers

Health Link: 811
Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642
Addiction Help Line: 1-866-332-2322
First Nations & Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310

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