

**Riverside Trauma Center**

**Things to Think About and How to Care for Yourself  
During Times of Disaster/High Stress**

**Initial and later reactions to disaster/stressful events:**

Many people have a range of reactions. A crisis can bring out strengths and the best in people. People come together to help one another, and you may see in yourself and others strengths that bring great pride.

**Similarly, stressful situations may bring a range of other reactions, including:**

Fear  
Disbelief  
Disorientation and numbing  
Difficulty making decisions  
Need for information  
Seeking help for you and your family  
Helpfulness to others  
Change in appetite and digestive problems  
Difficulty in sleeping – sleeping too much or too little  
Headaches  
Anger and suspicion  
Apathy and depression  
Crying  
Frustration and feelings of loss of control  
Feeling overwhelmed  
Moodiness and irritability  
Anxiety about the future  
Disappointment with and rejection of outside help  
Isolating oneself from family, friends, or social activities  
Guilt over not being able to prevent the disaster  
Domestic violence  
Change in daily activities

**Recognize your own feelings:**

- Talk to others about your feelings and reactions. This will help relieve your stress and help you to realize that your feelings are shared by others.
- Accept help from others in the spirit in which it is given. Wouldn't you help them?
- Whenever possible, take time off and do something you enjoy.
- Get enough rest.
- Get as much physical activity as possible, such as running or walking.
- Give someone a hug – touching is very important.

**Help for your community:**

- Listen when you can to those who are having problems, and share your own feelings.
- Be tolerant of the irritability and short tempers others show – everyone is stressed.