



## WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH SERVICES

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### Department of Health Services Shares Coping Tips for People Affected by Recent Storms

*Mental well-being is as important as physical well-being after a disaster*

Storms don't only damage property, they can affect your state of mind, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has tips to help people cope with the stress and unexpected changes natural disasters can create.

- Talk with others who understand how you feel. Don't isolate yourself.
- Exercise. Even something simple like stretching or a walk can help reduce stress.
- Get enough sleep. Establish and maintain a routine. For example, try to have meals at regular times.
- Avoid excessive exposure to disaster coverage on television or online. The constant replay of a disaster can increase stress.
- If you have property loss or damage, seek out appropriate resources for recovery and cleanup.
- Plan for the future.
- Get involved. If your community is impacted, volunteer your time or efforts.

There is no right or wrong way to feel when disaster strikes, but if you have been affected by a natural disaster, pay attention to these signs in yourself or in others:

- Eating or sleeping too much.
- Pulling away from people and things.
- Having low or no energy.
- Feeling numb, like nothing matters.
- Having unexplained aches or pains.
- Feeling helpless or hopeless.
- Smoking, drinking or using drugs.
- Feeling unusually confused or forgetful; on edge, angry, or upset; worried and scared.
- Fighting with family and friends.
- Unable to get rid of troubling thoughts and memories.

- Unable to perform daily tasks like taking care of kids or getting to work or school.

[SAMHSA, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) provides year-round and immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to a disaster. The Disaster Distress Helpline is toll-free, multilingual, and confidential. Call 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

If you need to help a child cope with a natural disaster, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) has information geared to all ages.

First responders, like police, fire, and EMTs, also may need help coping due to the long hours and devastation they face [DHS has a Self-Care Pocket Reference Guide](#) to help them deal with the stress.

Residents are also encouraged to call or visit the [211 Wisconsin](#) website to find resources in their area for mental health and other help.

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