

Take Care of Your Psychological and Emotional Needs

It is natural to be upset when you think your health or the health of your loved ones is threatened. Pay attention to your own feelings and take care of your emotional needs, then you can better help friends and family members handle their concerns.

Coping with uncertainty

Anxiety can be related to fear of the unknown. It is normal to feel anxious and worried during an emergency.

Everyone reacts differently to an emergency

People often experience changes in their physical, emotional or mental state during and after emergencies. For example, they may have trouble sleeping, experience anger or depression, or have problems at work or school. These are among the many normal reactions to an emergency situation. There are things you can do to cope with these problems. However, if these reactions seem extreme or last for a long time, the person suffering the condition should seek help.

Here are some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources
- Learn more about the specific health hazard
- Maintain your normal routine, if possible
- Avoid drugs and excessive drinking
- Exercise, eat well and get enough sleep
- Stay active physically and mentally

- Stay in touch with family and friends
- If you can, help others
- Keep a sense of humor
- Share your concerns with others

Stay connected

The fear associated with a public health emergency can push people apart. People who are normally close to family and friends may avoid contact because they are afraid they might get sick. It is important to stay connected with others. Use the phone and email.

Ask for help if you need it. If your anxiety about a health risk gets in the way of your daily life, talk to someone you trust. This may be your doctor, a family member, friend, clergy member, teacher or mental health professional.

If you notice a big change in a loved one, friend or co-worker, reach out to them. Make some time to talk. Watching out for others shows you care and it can be comforting for both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Get reliable information

When an emergency happens, it is important to keep things in perspective. Get information about the event from:

- Newspaper, radio, television
- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov
- Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division www.emd.wa.gov



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