

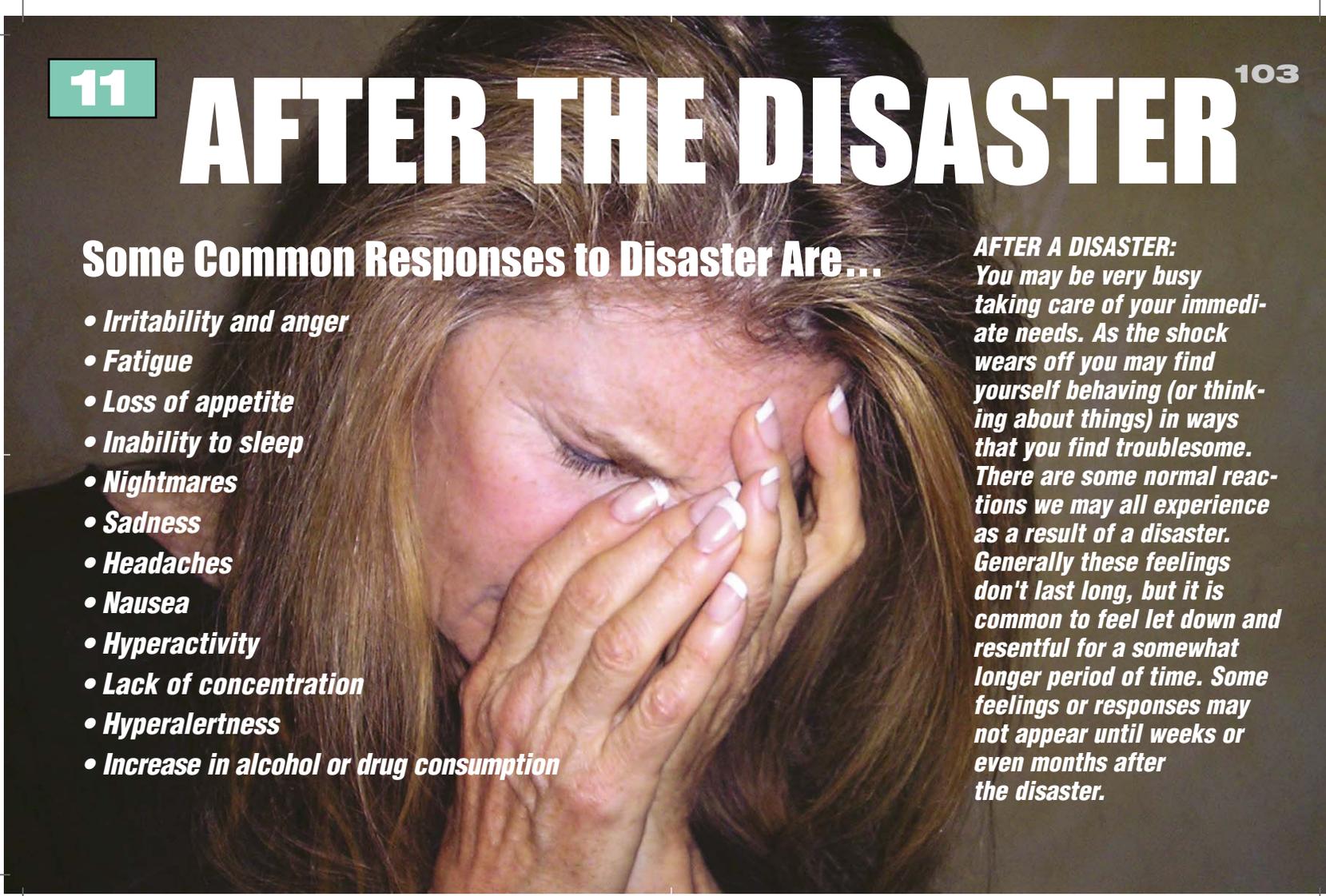
AFTER THE DISASTER

Some Common Responses to Disaster Are...

- Irritability and anger
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares
- Sadness
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Lack of concentration
- Hyperalertness
- Increase in alcohol or drug consumption

AFTER A DISASTER:

You may be very busy taking care of your immediate needs. As the shock wears off you may find yourself behaving (or thinking about things) in ways that you find troublesome. There are some normal reactions we may all experience as a result of a disaster. Generally these feelings don't last long, but it is common to feel let down and resentful for a somewhat longer period of time. Some feelings or responses may not appear until weeks or even months after the disaster.



Many survivors of a disaster will have at least one of these responses. Acknowledging your feelings and stress is the first step in improvement.

HELPFUL THINGS TO DO:

- 1. Talk about your disaster experiences. Sharing your feelings rather than holding them in will help you feel better about what happened.*
- 2. Listen to the experiences described by your family. Each person experiences things differently, and it helps to understand what each person feels is important.*
- 3. Take time off from cares, worries, and home repairs. Take time for some relaxation and find a place where you can get away from your worries for a little while.*
- 4. Pay attention to your health: be sure to eat a good diet, and get adequate sleep. Relaxation exercises may help if you have difficulty sleeping.*
- 5. Prepare for possible future emergencies to lessen feelings of helplessness and bring peace of mind.*
- 6. Rebuild personal relationships in addition to repairing other aspects of your life. A couple should make time to be alone together, to talk and have fun.*

SMALL CHILDREN may often become clingy, won't sleep alone, are upset by small things, hit siblings, defy adults, or act out in other ways. To help, take extra time with your child and give him or her extra support. Reestablish routines such as meals, bedtime, and playing with familiar toys as soon as possible.

OLDER CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS more easily understand what has happened—but do not expect them to be adults. They are often very helpful during a disaster but display more difficult behavior after the immediate crisis has passed. Common behavior includes neglecting things that they usually do or becoming forgetful. They may also have physical complaints or be sad, restless, defiant, or withdrawn. They may stay away from home or become involved with drugs and alcohol. To help them, make time to talk. Determine what they want to do to make their world organized again and, importantly, help them to do these things—even if you have to delay other things that need to be done.

***IF STRESS, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, OR PHYSICAL PROBLEMS CONTINUE,
YOU MAY WISH TO CONTACT THE POST-DISASTER SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE
AMERICAN RED CROSS, A COUNSELOR, OR A MENTAL HEALTH CENTER.***



N O T E S

FREQUENTLY ASKED DISASTER ASSISTANCE QUESTIONS

Q: How do I apply for disaster assistance?

ANSWER: There are various different services and special programs made available when the President signs a disaster declaration. The process to apply begins with a single telephone call to your local Assistance Center.

Q: How can I get in touch with my family?

ANSWER: The American Red Cross maintains a database to help you find family members. Numbers will be publicized during a disaster. Having an out-of-area contact whom family members know to call will help as well.

Q: What if my home is destroyed?

ANSWER: Contact the American Red Cross for immediate shelter. To apply for assistance, call FEMA's toll-free telephone number, 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) (TTY: 1-800-462-7585).

Q: Where can I get food and water following a disaster?

ANSWER: The American Red Cross and other volunteer agencies will provide food, water, and clothing. Listen to your radio or watch local media for the location of the nearest volunteer agency facility. There are also sources of water in your home. For example, your hot water heater is an excellent source of water. Turn off the power that heats your tank and let it cool. When you want water, place a container underneath and open the drain valve on the bottom of the tank.

Q: What if I lost my job or can't work because of a disaster?

ANSWER: People who lose their jobs because of a disaster may apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), which provides weekly benefits to individuals who are unemployed and not eligible for regular unemployment insurance compensation. You can call 1-800-621-FEMA (TTY: 1-800-462-7585) or the local unemployment office for information.

Q: What if I think I need legal help?

ANSWER: Local members of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division offer free legal counseling to low-income individuals. You can get information at a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) that may be set up after the President declares a major disaster. You can call 1-800-621-FEMA (TTY: 1-800-462-7585) for more information.

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