



TIPS FOR SURVIVORS OF A TRAUMATIC EVENT

How To Help Someone Cope After A Disaster

Many people who have trouble coping with loss need help, but don't reach out for it. In these cases you, as a friend, neighbor, or family member, may be able to help. Show you care, by words and actions. Small kind deeds and sincere affection or concern mean a lot. A friendly arm around a shoulder, a few words of support, or an invitation to talk may be appreciated more than you know.

- **Help the person accept help.** People who have a hard time working through a loss may brush off offers of assistance. Try to make it easy for them to accept help. Be assertive. Ask "When can I come over and help out?" or say "I'll be over at 3 o'clock to help you paint the living room."
- **Help with everyday tasks.** Keeping up with the routine demands of life can be too much. Maybe you could cook dinner, do the dishes, care for a child, mow the lawn, clean the house, or do the shopping. You may even want to take the children for a bike ride, for a walk, to a movie, or just play games together.
- **Encourage the survivors to talk.** Often people can see their situation more objectively when they talk to those who are willing to listen.
- **Be a good listener.** Don't advise, analyze, or judge the person. Encourage the person to keep talking: "Tell me more about that." "How do you feel about that?" "I can see this bothers you." "How can I help you resolve this?". Try not to:
 - Draw conclusions.
 - Change what the other person has said.
 - Interrupt or change the subject.
 - Dispute the other person's feelings.
 - Judge the other person's motives.
 - Finish thoughts or sentences for the other person.
 - Rush the other person.
- **Encourage solutions.** Help the person come up with solutions for the near future and encourage them to work toward those solutions. Help them find the resources to cope. You may have to help them get the help they need by making appointments or going with them once appointments are made.
- **Help survivors have fun.** Suggest doing something you know they like to do and make it easy for them to get out and do it. Make a list of activities you both enjoy; choose one you can do together.

Take Care of Yourself After Experiencing A Disaster

After a disaster there is so much to do and so many people to take care of that you can easily minimize the importance of taking care of yourself. Remember, it takes physical and emotional energy to rebuild. Take care of yourself first. If you become ill or overly stressed, you could cause more problems than you'll fix.

- **Do things to assure your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.**
 - Get a good night's sleep; don't take naps.
 - Eat healthy foods; avoid alcohol, caffeine, and junk foods.
 - Exercise, even if it is just taking a walk daily.
- **Just as bodies need nourishment, minds need rejuvenating.** This is why it is important to treat yourself to activities you enjoy.
 - Do fun things with your family.
 - Do something by yourself once a day that you find relaxing.
 - Spend time with friends.
- **Find people you can lean on.** Finding support is crucial to coping with loss. Often the people who can help you most are your friends and family. But, before they can help, you have to be willing to explain how you feel and what you need.

Additional Resources

Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge: www.mhagbr.com

Keep Calm Line - 866-310-7977

Behavioral Health Recovery Outreach Line
833-333-1132

Louisiana Spirit Crisis Counseling Program
<http://lds.la.gov/LouisianaSpirit>
LouisianaSpiritInfo@la.gov

Louisiana 211 - Dial 211
www.louisiana211.org

Mental Health America:
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

National Suicide Prevention Hopeline:
800-784-2433

National Suicide Prevention:
800-273-8255

National de Prevención del Suicidio:
888-628-9454

National Suicide Prevention Options for Deaf & Hard of Hearing:
800-799-4889

Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): www.fema.gov