

LIFE AFTER THE STORM

Helping Young People Cope After A Disaster



STRONG FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS ARE NORMAL

For many young people, a scary or life threatening event such as a hurricane or tornado can bring on strong feelings and mixed emotions. This is normal for anyone who has seen, heard about or lived through, a natural disaster or other distressing events.

Not all young people that experience disaster-related trauma react in the same way or at the same time. Some young people are able to deal with the events of the disaster and go on with their lives. Some have reactions right away and others may seem fine for months, then suddenly break down in emotion.

Crying, anger, guilt, headaches, stomach aches, trouble concentrating, flashbacks or disturbing thoughts are all common feelings and emotions you may have after a traumatic ordeal.

OTHER REACTIONS:

- *Trouble making friends*
- *Problems in school*
- *Worries about dying young*
- *Jittery or Jumpy*
- *Aggressive, mean, or even violent*
- *Problems with reality and being in certain places that bring up memories*



PTSD

If these reactions/stress-related symptoms last for several months and you are not feeling better you may have what is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



PTSD IS TREATABLE

PTSD is a set of symptoms that occur after a person has seen, heard about, or lived through a disaster or frightening event. Approximately three million children/young people get diagnosed with PTSD a given year. For most, these stress reactions go away after a few weeks but if they do not, you should see a doctor. Only a mental health professional or doctor can determine if you have PTSD. PTSD is treated with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. This form of therapy shows you how to calm your mind and body so that you can feel better, think more clearly, and make better decisions. It also teaches you how to identify certain thought patterns and how to change them. Some may receive a combination of medication and therapy to treat their PTSD.

HOW TO COPE

Working through your emotions and feelings after a disaster is a normal part of coping with what you have experienced. You do not have to deal with these emotions and feelings alone. It is important that you have someone you trust to confide in about your thoughts and feelings. This support will be the key to getting your life more on track.



HELPING A CHILD COPE

Let the child know that it is okay to feel upset when something bad or scary happens. Reassurance is key to helping. Don't be afraid to talk about the event, listen to the child's view, and let the child know that you care about their feelings. Another tip is finding a way to have the child help others affected from the disaster; this can boost self esteem.