

### Coping with the Emotional Impact of Hurricane Katrina

A traumatic event such as a natural disaster can produce many emotional and behavioral reactions. Reactions may vary depending to the degree one or one's loved ones are personally affected, life circumstances and life experiences. Some normal reactions could include feeling anxious, worried, powerless, depressed, vulnerable and unsafe, angry, fatigued, or having difficulty concentrating.

Reactions can be immediate or delayed. Feelings of emotional numbness can give way to grief or other responses as we take in what is happening. We may have "good days" and "bad days" in terms of how we are able to manage and cope with our feelings.

#### Ways to Cope with the Impact of a Natural Disaster

**Take action.** Volunteer to help, or contribute to the organizations that are helping the victims of the hurricane. You may want to reach out to those who have friends or loved ones in the areas affected by the hurricane. Find ways to express your needs during this challenging time. Engaging in safety planning at home and work may also help one feel more prepared and in control.

**Understanding** the nature and impact of the emotional experience is a major part of coping.

**Talk with others.** Talk out your feelings and concerns with loved ones and trusted friends/colleagues rather than keeping them held in. It will help reduce the stress. Talking with others will give them permission to share their concerns as well.

**Monitor media exposure.** It will be very easy to overwhelm yourself with media coverage, especially by those worried about friends and loved ones residing in the affected areas. Watch the line between being informed and being saturated by disturbing events. Be aware of how you are being affected and take care of yourself. As much as possible, keep small children from viewing disturbing media images.

**Pay attention to your emotional needs and those of others.** Our own feelings and emotional needs, as well as those of coworkers and family, are closer to the surface in times of anxiety like this. Tempers can be shorter, children more clingy, and there can be a feeling of free-floating anxiety and sadness. Feelings can go up and down in a roller coaster effect.

Know that these are normal tendencies at a time like this. Everyone will need more kindness, consideration and patience. It's okay to have a good cry, when needed. What is happening is very sad and very serious for many people.

**Engage in self-nurturing activities.** At times like this, it is a good idea to increase doing those things that are healing for you, such as meditation, prayer, walking, exercise, hot baths, hobbies, being outside with nature, and spending time with family and good friends.

#### For more help -- for yourself or if you are concerned about someone else:

**For students,** Counseling Services for Students is available at 642-9494.

**For faculty and staff,** CARE Services for Faculty and Staff is available at 643-7754.