

After the Storm: Common Responses

In the weeks and months following a high stress or traumatic event such as a disaster, many people experience new or worsening behavioral, cognitive (thinking), emotional, physical, and/or spiritual reactions. Discovering that our reactions may be related to the disaster can provide a sense of normalcy and security and help us decide if further support and help is needed. If reactions persist for more than one month or cause significant problems in day-to-day activities or relationships, consider seeking a referral for further help.

Behavioral	Cognitive (thinking)*	Emotional	Physical	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sleep problems ○ Withdrawal ○ Inability to rest ○ Emotional outbursts ○ Avoiding thoughts or feelings related to the event ○ Eating problems: loss or increase of appetite ○ Feeling uncoordinated ○ Significant loss of interest in prior activities ○ Aggressive, self-destructive, or reckless behavior ○ Exaggerated startle response ○ Increased substance abuse or other addictive behaviors ○ Increased conflict in primary relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Problems concentrating ○ Nightmares ○ Hyper-vigilance ○ Flashbacks ○ Blaming others or self ○ Poor problem solving ○ Preoccupied with thoughts of the event ○ Inability to remember some things about the event ○ Ongoing negative beliefs about self or the world ○ Avoidance of thoughts, feelings, places, people, activities, or reminders of the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Persistent negative emotions such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Horror • Anger • Guilt • Shame ○ Feeling anxious ○ Emotional outbursts/loss of control ○ Feeling hopeless or helpless ○ Feeling numb ○ Staying upset after seeing reminders of the event ○ Persistently feeling “unsafe” ○ Feeling detached from others ○ Unable to experience positive emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heart palpitations ○ Weakness ○ Rapid heart rate ○ Nausea/diarrhea ○ Shallow breathing ○ Fatigue ○ Unusual sweating ○ Excessive thirst ○ High blood pressure ○ Headaches ○ Physically feeling as if you are experiencing the event again (sights, sounds smells) ○ Chest pains (<i>If you are experiencing chest pains, call 911. Immediately seek medical attention!</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loss of meaningfulness ○ Withdrawal from religious support or community ○ Feeling abandoned or alienated from God ○ Anger at God ○ Hopelessness or despair ○ Guilt ○ Crisis of faith ○ Mistrust of religious institutions ○ Mistrust of God/higher being ○ Feeling punished ○ Feeling unforgiven

*** If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, call 911, a suicide hotline, or go to a nearby emergency room.**

The fifteen denominations, 1,500 local congregations, interfaith, and community partners comprising the Oklahoma Conference of Churches want you to know you are not alone. For assistance in finding a local clergy, spiritual care provider, or faith community to walk with you along the pathway through recovery, contact:

Oklahoma Conference of Churches
Emotional and Spiritual Care Ministries
at 405-525-2928 or 405-315-1528
www.okchurches.org



“The Pathway Forward” is a series of practical disaster response resources and tips from the Oklahoma Conference of Churches Emotional and Spiritual Care Ministries. These resources, including this document, may be freely copied as long as (a) they are not sold; (b) no changes are made; and (c) OCC and any listed authors are credited. 0214