



Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Mental Health
Funded through a grant from FEMA and SAMHSA

YOU CAN MANAGE STRESS

- ❖ **Recognize the signs of stress in your life**
- ❖ **Accept your limits**
- ❖ **Learn to be an assertive communicator and use active listening skills**
- ❖ **Pick and use relaxation methods that work for you**
- ❖ **Think positively**
- ❖ **Balance work and play**
- ❖ **Use time management techniques**
- ❖ **Treat yourself to something special - you're worth it**

Managing Stress

Feeling emotionally exhausted, being too tired to think clearly and experiencing a general sense of being overwhelmed by recent events are normal responses to chaotic incidents such as the recent hurricanes. Being "stressed-out" is a normal response to an abnormal event. Even though experiencing high levels of stress is normal, if ignored, stress can decrease your normal abilities to cope with every day life events. You may find you have a harder time dealing with things than you did before the event. If ignored, overwhelming stress responses can lead to increased risk of physical and emotional disorders.

Any individual can suffer from stress overloaded. No one is immune. Here are some things you might notice in yourself & others around you in the days and weeks ahead.

Some Signs of Stress Overload

Physical	Thinking	Feeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster heartbeat &/or breathing • Sweating • Nausea • Decreased appetite • Increase in eating • Sleep difficulties (getting to sleep or staying asleep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired concentration • Not thinking clearly • Confusion • Memory Loss • Can't solve simple problems • Disorientation-losing track of time or tasks you're doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Fear/Anxiety • Agitation • Grief • Numbness • Surreal-not really happening • Withdrawal/Isolation

Delayed Reactions May Include: Loss of sleep, nightmares, flashbacks, loss of desire to perform normal functions, unfocused fears, depression, anxiety, loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy doing

What can you do if you notice these symptoms?

- Take care of yourself even when you don't feel like it; it helps your mind, body and emotions adjust to the stress.
- Eat a balanced diet. If you can't eat full meals, try 'grazing'. Eat smaller amounts of healthy food at more frequent intervals.
- Stick to your normal sleep/wake routines as much as possible. Rest helps your body recover.
- Exercise helps release some of the physical stress. A brisk 20-30 minute walk can be helpful even if you aren't normally a big exerciser.
- Talk about how you feel with co-workers and family Give yourself the gift of releasing some of the pressure verbally.
- Journaling about thoughts and feelings is helpful to some people. This is especially true if you aren't comfortable talking about your feelings or can't identify anyone with whom you are comfortable talking.
- Stick to your normal life as much as possible. Now is not the time to make big, major, irreversible life decisions if you can avoid it.
- Do those things and make those decisions that give you a feeling of control in your life.

For Family Members, Friends and Co-Workers

- Follow their lead about how much & how soon they want to talk about the event.
- Listen carefully. Allow them to tell their stories if they want or need to, but don't force it.
- Spend time with them if they want that; allow them the time & space they need if that is desired.
- Ask them, 'what do you need from me now?' Do what they perceive as helpful from you. That's not always the same as what would be helpful to you.
- Don't take their strong intense emotions personally
- Don't tell them it could be worse.

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