



Recovery after a natural disaster

Natural disasters like bushfires, floods, cyclones, and other traumatic natural events are extremely distressing for those affected.

When disasters occur they can catch even the most conscientious and well-prepared people off-guard. Lives and property can be lost with little warning, causing a great deal of heartache and suffering.

Following a natural disaster, many people experience physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. Some people will be able to manage but, for others it may be difficult to cope. Most people eventually recover and go on to rebuild their lives, but it can take time and sometimes professional help is needed.

What you might experience:

- Feeling stressed, anxious, exhausted or confused
- Feeling sad, overwhelmed or angry
- Shock, feeling 'numb'
- Uncertainty about the future
- Feeling lonely, isolated or withdrawn
- Feeling unwell – headaches, difficulty sleeping, eating, weight loss/gain
- Resentment or blaming others
- Increased substance use
- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm



Tips to help you cope after a natural disaster

For most people it can take time to regain a sense of normalcy after a traumatic event. Recovery can be slow but there are things you can do to work through this process.

- **Connect with people and community** - talk to those that you trust. Connecting with other people will help you to break isolating thought patterns and re-establish your sense of connection and security.
- **Take action** - decide who will do what and when. Use a plan or a checklist to help you work through the things that need to be done. This will help you to feel in control and that you are making progress.
- **Practice self-care** - stay active, eat well and sleep. Try to get back to your normal routine when you feel ready. Blockout some time for things you enjoy or that you find relaxing.
- **Know it's okay to be struggling** - if you can realise that your feelings are a normal human response and that thousands of others are probably feeling the same way then it's a great step towards recovery.
- **Limit media consumption** - catch up with the daily news but be mindful to switch off by engaging in everyday activities such as cooking, gardening, walking the dog etc.
- **Helping others** - encourage others to talk by offering a sensitive listening ear. Try saying, "I'm here to listen for as long as you want, when and if you are ready."
- **Consider professional help** - If you notice that you're not coping then seek professional help. There is always someone to listen and provide support.

How to help children after a natural disaster

- Let your children know that natural disasters are rare, and this is why they attract so much attention.
- Give your children extra attention and reassurance. Let them know that feeling distressed is a normal response.
- Acknowledge your own feelings about the situation and let your children know its ok to talk.
- Try to get back to a normal routine as quickly as possible. This provides a sense of security.
- Limit or supervise access to online content, social media and news channels.
- If you are concerned seek professional help early.

Need help?

Call OzHelp:

1300 694 357 (Weekdays, 9am - 5pm)

Call Lifeline:

13 11 14 (24/7)

Call Beyond Blue:

1300 224 636

Call Kids Helpline:

1800 551 800

Talk to a health professional:

Your GP, psychologist or counsellor

Connect with someone you trust:

Family member, friend or colleague

For financial assistance contact:

Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul or Centrelink.