THE EFFECTS OF DISASTER RESPONSE

Following major traumatic events, disaster responders have found themselves reacting in many of the same ways as the primary survivors. Some of the subsequent problems they have experienced include increased alcohol and drug use, increased sick time, changes in profession, burn out or increased domestic violence.

Most disaster responders have many protective factors in their lives, including strong social supports, training and active life-styles. Sometimes primary issues around disaster response can be forgotten and avoidance and denial of difficulties can arise.

It’s important to acknowledge several key points:
• No one who responds to a disaster or mass casualty event is untouched by it.
• Profound sadness, grief and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
• We all have limitations.

DISASTER RESOURCES

AMERICAN RED CROSS FAMILY WELFARE PROGRAM
Phone: 303.722.7474 / 970.242.4851
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION / EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
Phone: 888.246.2675
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
Phone: 800.621.FEMA
NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS
Phone: 301.890.2119
SAMHSA DISASTER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (DTAC)
Phone: 800.308.3515

If you, your family, or other survivors of disaster would like to speak with a counselor, we are here to help.

24/7 Crisis Response | 888.207.4004
MindSpringsHealth.org
It’s extremely important that you care for yourself. Should you find yourself recognizing any of the following reactions in yourself or others, take action to support self-care and recovery.

- Difficulties communicating thoughts
- Difficulties remembering instructions
- Difficulties maintaining balance, or unusual clumsiness
- Uncharacteristically argumentative
- Difficulties making decisions & problem-solving
- Short attention span
- Unnecessary risk-taking, including substance use
- Difficulties sleeping
- Increase or decrease in activity level, withdrawal
- Irritability, anger and easily frustrated
- Compassion stress: helplessness, confusion, isolation
- Compassion fatigue: demoralization, alienation, resignation
- Physical reactions (headache, nausea, easily startled)
- Attempts to over-control in professional or personal situations, or act out a ‘rescuer complex’
- Refusal to follow orders or leave the scene

If any of the previous signs are experienced, it’s time to take action.

TAKE ACTION

Get yourself out of there. Someone else can do the job you are doing.

- Take a lower stress work rotation, or return to a more routine work environment
- Go home. Connect with the people you love and who love you.