

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF A HURRICANE

There is a normal psychological reaction of individuals to an abnormal overwhelming disaster such as a hurricane which is associated with severe threats of physical injury, physical injury, death and the loss of property and personal belongings.

Impact:

Hurricanes result in heightened anxiety and emotional distress as people try to adapt to the changing circumstances of their lives and as they struggle for food, water, shelter and health support systems.

People may be exposed to collapsing or damaged buildings, destruction of their schools, or familiar community landmarks. They may encounter rubble, debris or other destruction and may experience the horror of seeing severely injured people or dead bodies.

Children may witness anxiety and fear in parents and caretakers who are usually confident. They may not only lose their homes but also cherished memorabilia. Children may lose treasured toys,

There will be a spectrum of psychological responses. The condition of individual with pre-existing emotional or behavioral problem may be exacerbated if their support systems fails, if medicines are not available or if their routine is destabilized. Individuals may develop chronic emotional and behavioral problems following exposure to pervasive stressors such as the loss of community infrastructure, home or employment or of family or friends. Emotional exhaustion and biological wear and tear may impact the ability of individual or family to quickly recover

Individuals frequently experience traumatic reminders during which the individual will suddenly relive and re-experience all the emotions, fears, thoughts and perceptions they initially experienced at the time of the hurricane. Traumatic reminders may include the sudden onset of dark clouds, bolts of lightening, torrential rains and a pick up in the wind as well as other activities associated with the hurricane.

Common Reactions:

- Feelings of insecurity, helplessness, anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, despair and worries about the future
- Specific fears of recurrence and that it will happen again
- Hyperarousal, irritability, temper tantrums, agitation, hyperactivity
- Clinging-dependent behaviors or avoidant and phobic symptoms
- Depression
- Somatic symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, loss of appetite, nightmares, sleep problems
- Increased concerns regarding the safety of family members, friends, and loved ones
- School based problems with decreased motivation and school performance
- Adolescents may respond differently than younger children in a hurricane or other natural disaster.
 - Feelings of a foreshortened future
 - Socially withdrawn, angry, irritable
 - Risky, as they are eager to live life to the fullest
 - Conflict with authority
 - Childhood myths and explanations as to causality