

Dealing with Traumatic Events

Plan Ahead

Whatever the crisis, some planning before the disaster can usually help family members react wisely. Families that work together to prepare for the problem will cope better than those who do not. Consider how your children might react in a disaster.

What would your own reactions be? The crisis can affect each person's emotional and physical well being. Plan in advance how to deal with the situation. Follow the advice in this booklet. Discuss and practice plans with family members before a disaster strikes. Work together to help everyone understand the procedures.

Venting Feelings

Listening: In times of trouble and crisis, many people need someone who will just listen. Talking about the experience helps the burden seem a little lighter and easier to bear. If you are feeling "blue" or "down," you may want to contact a friend or neighbor, a family member, your pastor or rabbi, or someone else you feel you can really talk to as a friend.

If you find yourself called upon to listen to a friend or neighbor who just wants to talk, please listen. Some people will feel very much alone and afraid; others will blame themselves and wonder, "Why Me?" They are not really looking for an answer to that question, but rather are saying, "How can I endure this?" "How can I go on?" Solutions, answers, and advice aren't necessary. Just listen and let the troubled person talk.

Providing Support

Sometimes people who are very upset or frightened, later are embarrassed about expressing those feelings. They may feel "weak," or that they have "dumped" on you. Reassure your friend by saying that his/her feelings are normal and perfectly understandable. Be sure that your friend knows you are available to listen again, if he or she needs to talk. Help her/him to look toward the future, when things will be better.

If you are concerned that someone is very depressed and you do not feel you are able to help, be sure he/she does get help from a trained professional. Suggest a counselor, member of the religious community, social worker, or support group to help your friend through this period.

Coping With Children's Emotions

Remember that children mirror their parent's anxieties. Be calm to reduce your children's fears.

Take something familiar, such as a favorite toy or book, into a new situation. This helps a child feel more secure.

In a crisis situation a child may demonstrate unusually childish behavior. This is normal for a child who is frightened and who doesn't understand a situation as serious as a hurricane.

Most children are not capable of understanding the magnitude and severity of a crisis situation. Be understanding and patient.