



US Army Corps of Engineers
Louisiana
Recovery Field Office

Deployment Coping Tips

Disaster work can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a very rewarding experience. It may also cause stress and feelings of isolation. Often people who are involved in a disaster experience a unique feeling that no one can understand what they are experiencing.

No one is untouched by a disaster, including family, friends and co-workers. Experiencing a disaster or responding to one will disrupt your routine and that of your family. Often families are separated

and that separation itself can cause feelings of isolation.

COPING TIPS

Here are some tips to help you through times when you feel alone and isolated:

- *Expect change:* Change is a part of disaster work. Knowing and expecting change will prepare you to avoid some of the negative reactions to change.
 - *Embrace change:* Try to adopt a spirit of adventure and reframe the change as a new learning experience and an adventure. It can be a time for personal growth for you and your family.
 - *Plan activities:* Since your normal activities are absent from disaster life, you must be creative and plan activities before you find yourself with too much alone time on your hands.
 - *Do not forget the home front:* We are in an electronic age and family and friends are as near as your phone or computer. Keep your friends and family informed about what is going on.
 - *Remember what you did at home to avoid isolation:* You may find similar activities where you are now. For example, you might want to check out the fishing, hunting, gym, sewing club, etc.
- *Find new friends:* You will find yourself among many interesting new people. Chat with them and check out their interests. You might be surprised to find buddies who like to talk about and do what you enjoy.
 - *Expect holidays and special days to be more difficult:* Those special days require extra planning. Make sure you plan activities and meals for those special days like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. Send cards home.
 - *Expect your co-workers to experience isolation:* Since you are not the only one in a disaster, many co-workers will be in the same situation. Some of us help ourselves by helping others. It may mean inviting a co-worker to a meal, or even volunteering in a soup kitchen or hospital.
 - *Exercise:* Plan physical activities either alone or with others to reduce feelings of isolation and stress. Exercising at least 3 days a week for 30 minutes is recommended.
 - *Take the time to groom yourself:* We all enjoy a little personal TLC. Take a nice long bath, give yourself a manicure, or plan a massage.

- *Check the entertainment section of local newspapers and web sites:* Often you will find interesting activities such as concerts, plays, sports activities, or religious or civic gatherings.
- *Check out the yellow pages for churches, mosques, and synagogues of your choice:* You can tap into others of your denomination as they celebrate the week or holiday. Joining in with them will provide a feeling of connection and normalcy.
- *Find a good book or movie:* This time can be used to catch up on personal reading, continuing education, movies, or hobbies.
- *Make good use of any spare time:* Catch up with personal jobs, paperwork, shopping for souvenirs, see a local attraction or take a nap.

Peer Supporter:

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Your routine has been changed
- Security of the familiar is gone
- Consciously provide yourself some structure
- Connect with your support system
- Plan activities that involve others
- Birthdays, special days, and holidays require special planning to prevent feelings of isolation
- Expect and embrace change
- Expect possible disappointment, frustration, conflict and depression
- Expect mood swings; they will decrease with time
- Avoid negative and unsupportive people.
- Be creative in identifying ways to connect such as coffee, movies, chat sessions, walks, shared household duties like clothes washing.
- Avoid dependence on alcohol or drugs to numb out.
- Reward yourself periodically with a treat.
- Have fun when you can.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Support systems provide individuals with resources to overcome stressful situations.
- Those people who utilize support systems have a better adjustment to disaster and other stressful situations
- Support systems are as variable as individuals:
 - They include family, friends, co-workers, churches and synagogues, organizations, clubs, neighborhood cafes, and even computer chat rooms
- Those members in our regular support system like and support us as ourselves- we do not have to earn their love.
- Our ability to bounce back from stress is greatly enhanced by connecting with supportive people in our lives.



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