

Resilience

The devastation caused by hurricanes can leave people with strong emotions and a strong sense of uncertainty. Yet people generally adapt well over time to life-changing situations and stressful conditions. What enables them to do so?

Resilience

10 Ways to Build Resilience

Make connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Even for those separated from their families, connections can be built among new acquaintances. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that even though they themselves have suffered losses during Ike, helping others makes them feel good about themselves.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can't undo the waters or winds of the hurricanes, but you can change how you interpret the hurricanes. Try to see beyond the current crisis to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of Ike. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

Move toward your goals. Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Take decisive actions. Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would go away. Although the hurricane uprooted people from their normal routines, establish new routines as soon as you can, even change again if you are moved.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery.

People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.

Nurture a positive view of yourself. Reframe how you think about yourself. If you were in the hurricanes, you are a survivor, not a victim of the hurricanes. Acknowledging your own strength and resourcefulness in dealing with difficult conditions can help you develop confidence in yourself.

Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

Maintain a hopeful outlook. An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Although you may not be up to your usual level of activity, try to get some exercise and try to find something to do that will relax you, whether it be telling a story to your child or meditating. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

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Student Wellness

Counseling & Health Services

NEW

Phone Number & Location

409-747-9320

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After Hours:

Access Center 1-800-917-8906

Coping 6 Months After Hurricane Ike

It is common for people recovering from traumatic experiences like Hurricane Ike to continue to have emotional and cognitive difficulty for one year beyond the initial experience. If you are still experiencing distress, you are not alone. Your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors may be creating problems with work effectiveness and school progress, relationships, and concentration. It is not uncommon for depression, anxiety, and anger to surface long after the actual hurricane. Feelings of sadness, frustration, and irritation can easily escalate to hopelessness and helplessness. Putting into practice some of the tips in this guide can help you along the path to managing the difficult year following the storm and feeling better.

Tips for Managing Distress Related to Hurricane Ike

What happens to people when there is a hurricane?

Shock and **denial** are typical responses to traumatic events and disasters, especially shortly after the event. As the initial shock subsides, reactions will vary from one person to another. The following, however, are normal responses to a traumatic event:

1. Feelings become intense and sometimes unpredictable. You may become more irritable than usual, and your mood may change back and forth dramatically. You might be especially anxious or nervous, or even become depressed.
2. You might have repeated and vivid memories of the event. These are called flashbacks and they may occur for no apparent reason and may lead to physical reactions such as rapid heart beat or sweating.
3. You may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions, or become more easily confused. Sleeping and eating patterns also may be disrupted.
4. Recurring emotional reactions are common. Reactions can be prompted by sights and smells that remind you of preparing for or responding to the hurricane. These sensory perceptions can trigger fear that the hurricane or its damage may reoccur.
5. Interpersonal relationships often become strained. Greater conflict, such as more frequent arguments with family members and peers, is common. On the other hand, you might become withdrawn and isolated and avoid your usual activities.
6. Physical symptoms may accompany the extreme stress. For example, headaches, nausea and chest pain may result and may require medical attention. Pre-existing medical conditions may worsen due to the stress.

How can I help myself and my family?

There are a number of steps you can take to help restore emotional well being and a sense of control in the wake of the hurricane Ike.

1. **Recognize** that this is a challenging time, but it is one that you can manage.
2. Allow yourself to **mourn the losses** you have experienced. Be patient with changes in your emotional state
3. **Take a news break.** Watching replays of footage from the hurricane can make your stress even greater. Often, the media tries to interest viewers by presenting worst case scenarios. These may not be representative of your home or community.
4. **Ask for support** from people who care about you and who will listen and empathize with your situation. But keep in mind that your typical support system may be weakened if those who are close to you also have experienced or witnessed the hurricane.
5. **Communicate** your experience in whatever ways feel comfortable to you - such as by talking with family or close friends or keeping a diary.
6. **Engage in healthy behaviors** to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress. Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest. If you experience difficulties sleeping, you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques.
7. **Avoid alcohol and drugs** since these can increase a sense of depression and/or impede you from doing what is necessary to be resilient and cope with events.
8. **Establish or reestablish routines** such as eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. Take some time off from the demands of daily life by pursuing hobbies or other enjoyable activities.
9. If possible, **Avoid major life decisions** such as switching jobs because these activities tend to be highly stressful.

How do people respond differently over time?

Some people respond immediately, while others have delayed reactions - sometimes months or even years later. Some have adverse effects for a long period of time, while others recover rather quickly. And reactions can change over time. Some who have suffered from trauma are energized initially by the event to help them with the challenge of coping, only to later become discouraged or depressed. A number of factors affect the length of time people need to recover from the storm, including: *Degree of intensity and loss; duration of exposure to the events and damage of the events ; A person's general ability to cope with emotionally challenging situations; Other stressful events preceding the traumatic experience. Individuals faced with other emotionally challenging situations, such as serious health problems or family-related difficulties, may have more intense reactions to the new stressful event and need more time to recover.*

When should I seek professional help?

Some people are able to cope effectively with the emotional and physical demands of the hurricane by using their own support systems. It is not unusual, however, to find that serious problems persist and continue to interfere with daily living. For example, some may feel overwhelming nervousness or lingering sadness that adversely affects interpersonal relationships and job performance.

Individuals with prolonged reactions that disrupt their daily functioning should consult with a trained and experienced mental health professional.

If you feel you need to speak with a psychologist or psychiatrist, contact student wellness to make an appointment. We are here to help you recover.

