

Tips for Coping with the Oil Spill Disaster

Managing Your Stress



Know When to Get Help

Sometimes things become so overwhelming that you need help from a mental health or substance abuse professional. If you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him/herself or another person; looks for ways to kill him/herself; talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide; feels rage, uncontrolled anger, or desires revenge; or shows signs of stress (listed on this page) for several days or weeks, **GET HELP** by calling one of the hotlines listed on the next page.

What You Need to Know

Financial and personal stress resulting from the oil spill is a normal reaction and may impact some individuals and communities for a long period of time. During and after a stressful event, be aware of how you are feeling physically and emotionally. Know the signs of stress in yourself and your loved ones, how to relieve stress, and when to get help.

Know the Signs of Stress

Your Behavior:

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in your alcohol use, tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs
- An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Crying frequently
- Worrying excessively
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything

- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun

Your Body:

- Having stomach aches or diarrhea
- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or eating too much
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches
- Being easily startled
- Experiencing a change in sleeping patterns

Your Emotions:

- Being anxious or fearful
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling angry
- Feeling heroic, overly energetic, or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness



Hotlines

Oil Spill Distress Helpline
Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990

National Domestic Violence Hotline
Toll-Free: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY: 1-800-787-3224

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)
Web Site: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Treatment Locator

SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
TTY: 1-800-487-4TTY (4889)
Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/>

Information Clearinghouse

SAMHSA Health Information Network
Toll-Free: 1-877-726-4727
TTY: 1-800-487-4TTY (4889)
Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/shin>

Helpful Resources

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)
Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515
E-Mail: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov
Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/>
For specific State referral information, please contact SAMHSA DTAC.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Web Site: <http://www.nctsnet.org>

Workplace Helpline
Toll-Free: 1-800-967-5752
Web Site: <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/>

Note: Inclusion of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Your Thinking:

- Having trouble remembering things
- Feeling confused
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Having difficulty making decisions

Know How To Relieve Stress

You can manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.

Keep Yourself Healthy:

- Eat healthy foods, and drink water
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine
- Avoid use of alcohol or drugs
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Get physical exercise

Use Practical Ways To Relax:

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, engage in pleasurable hobbies, listen to music, or spend time with family and friends
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, or talk to family
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends

Pay Attention to Your Body, Feelings, and Spirit:

- Recognize and pay attention to any early warning signs of stress
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of handling this event, and think of how you handled past events
- Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common after a traumatic event
- Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer, or helping others in need
- Consider ways to help your community recover from the oil spill
- Be patient with yourself and others. It may take time to feel like you have regained control over your life.