

# Mental health recovery after a disaster

After a disaster or major incident, it's common to feel stress and grief. For some people it can affect their mental health straight away, but others may not feel the impacts until later. Disasters can also have a long-lasting effect on some people's mental health.

## Common reactions after a disaster

- > Anger, fear, sadness
- > Difficulty concentrating, remembering details
- > Feeling overwhelmed
- > Trouble thinking clearly or making decisions
- > Changes to eating and sleeping habits

## Dealing with the emotional impact

There are many things that you can do to help your mental health:

- > Acknowledging your feelings and talking about them
- > Accepting support from family and friends, and community programs
- > Getting back into a routine
- > Looking after your physical health through exercise and regular healthy meals
- > Not over-indulging in alcohol or comfort foods
- > Taking time out from work or other roles to relax and unwind
- > Talking with your doctor or a counsellor if needed

## When to get help

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the following symptoms please seek professional help:

- > Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- > Loss of hope or interest in the future
- > Finding it difficult to participate in day to day activities
- > Experiencing overwhelming fear, poor sleep, flashbacks or persistent thoughts
- > Feelings of sadness or depression that are severe or lasting too long
- > Using excessive amounts of alcohol or drugs to cope with the situation

Information continued on next page...



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## Where to go for help

If you feel a person's safety is at immediate risk:  
**dial 000 (Triple Zero) or Teletype 106**

**Mental Health Triage Service (24/7 mental health emergencies)**

**Call 13 14 65**

Examples of a mental health emergency:

- > If you, or the person, have concerns about their safety including an increased risk of self-harm and/or thoughts about suicide
- > Concerns about the person's behaviour, safety and welfare have escalated and require more immediate attention, and the person's needs are not able to be met through other support systems (eg. GP or other local services)

## Other useful services

Health Direct	1800 022 222
Red Cross	8100 4500
LifeLine	13 11 14
BeyondBlue	1300 224 636
Regional Access	1300 032 186
Nurse-on-call	1300 606 024
Suicide Call Back Service	1300 659 467

## Help for children and young people

Children and young people exposed to disasters will react in different ways. It is important to be aware of changes in a child or young person's conversation, behaviour, level of activity, physical health or emotional state so they can be linked in with supports early.

If you are concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a child or young person, contact:

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) 08 8161 7198**

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## Further information

For further information and resources, visit

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/DisastersAndMentalHealthSupport](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/DisastersAndMentalHealthSupport)



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG\* for consumers and the community – June 2018.



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