



Rebuilding Healthy Homes: Dealing with Stress & Grief

Keep in mind that finding damage to your home may be emotionally traumatic. Prepare yourself for the possibilities. Use these tips for dealing with stress and the grief you may experience. Locate service providers who are qualified and available to help.

- Prepare yourself for the possibility that seeing your damaged home in person may hit you harder than seeing pictures or news reports before you return home.
- Limit your exposure to traumatic news coverage and social media about the disaster until you can handle it without a toll on your well-being.
- Refocus your attention on positive things, and what you can do. Make a list and plan of action.
- Stay connected with family and friends. Try to resume as many personal routines as possible. Try to do something with others that you and they have enjoyed in the past.
- Don't skip meals. Drink plenty of water and eat healthy meals. Avoid alcohol and other depressants. Stay on schedule with any doctor-prescribed medications and procedures.
- Limit the time you spend working on-site each day and week. Take breaks off-site to de-stress. Get plenty of rest.
- Know that recovery will take time.
- Expect hurdles.
- Help others, and accept help for yourself.
- Watch for signs of depression or despair in yourself and others. If they persist beyond the expected effects of fatigue, seek help from your doctor, a counselor or other mental

health professional. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov), symptoms of depression may include the following:

1. Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
2. Fatigue and decreased energy
3. Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
4. Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
5. Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
6. Irritability, restlessness
7. Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
8. Overeating or appetite loss
9. Persistent aches or pains, or digestive problems that do not ease when treated
10. Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
11. Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

If you (or someone you know) is thinking of suicide or self-harm, call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to be connected to a trained counselor at a suicide crisis center nearest you. In Alaska, call 1-800-478-7575 (NorthStar Behavioral Health System).

Note: People with hearing or speech disabilities may reach the national number through the Federal Relay Service teletype service at 800-877-8339.

This publication is excerpted with permission from "Rebuild Healthy Homes," a publication of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Download the FREE Rebuild Healthy Homes app! This app has information for restoring homes after a natural disaster, including the principles and technical aspects of the safe and proper removal of mold, radon, asbestos, lead, and other hazards. Available on the App Store for iOS devices: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rebuild-healthy-homes/id980660616?mt=8>