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# News Release

## **West Virginia survivors coping with emotional stress of storm and flooding**

**CHARLESTON, W. Va.**— If you are facing the loss of your home, business or a cherished possession as a result of the severe storms, flooding, landslides and mudslides that hit on June 22-29, you may find that you are struggling to cope with the emotional impact of the disaster.

Everyone who lives through a natural disaster is affected by it in some way. The experts tell us that West Virginians who lived through the storms know well the profound sadness, grief and anger it is normal to feel anxious about your own safety and that of your family and close friends. The emotional toll taken by a disaster can sometimes be even more devastating than the financial strains resulting from the damage or loss of a home, business or personal property that follows a disaster. These are normal reactions to an abnormal event.

Children and older adults are of special concern in the aftermath of disasters. Even individuals who experience a disaster “second hand” through exposure to extensive media coverage can be affected.

The important thing, the doctors say, is how you react to your feelings; what you do to relieve your stress. Everyone has different needs and different ways of coping. Here are some tips from professional crisis counselors for West Virginia survivors coping with emotional stress in the wake of the storms and flooding:

## West Virginia survivors coping with emotional stress of storm and flooding—Pg. 2

- Acknowledging your feelings helps you recover.
- Focusing on your strengths and abilities helps you heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies, or professional counselors for counseling.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) is a national hotline dedicated to providing year-round immediate crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to any natural disaster.

Children can be especially vulnerable to stress following a disaster, such as June’s severe storms and flooding in West Virginia. Preschoolers, children and teenagers may have witnessed their home being damaged or destroyed, experienced an evacuation, suffered an injury, lost a pet or even just had their normal routines interrupted. These children are susceptible to bouts of anxiety, fear and behavioral problems.

Younger children may suffer sleep problems or bedwetting. Older children may display anger, aggression or withdrawal. Some children who have had only indirect contact with the disaster, but witness it on television, may develop distress.

As parents and adults, you can make disasters less traumatic for children by taking steps to manage your own feelings and plans for coping. Parents are almost always the best source of support for children in disasters.

What's the best way to respond to your child during or after a disaster? Click [here](#) for some pointers, including a guide to common child reactions to disaster by age.

Your older parents and other older loved ones may be just as vulnerable, if not more so, to post-disaster stress, as your children.

For more information on how caretakers can help older loved ones cope with disaster – and how caretakers should take care of themselves – visit <http://blog.aarp.org/2013/06/05/amy-goyer-caregiver-tips-for-tragedy/> .

If you or someone you know is struggling with post-disaster stress, you are not alone. Help is as near as your phone. Call the **Help for West Virginia Helpline** at **844-435-7498**. Also, you can contact the **Disaster Distress Helpline** at **800-985-5990** or text “TalkWithUs” to **66746**.

Additional information on West Virginia’s disaster recovery can be found by visiting [fema.gov/disaster/4273](http://fema.gov/disaster/4273), [twitter.com/femaregion3](https://twitter.com/femaregion3), [twitter.com/FEMA](https://twitter.com/FEMA), [facebook.com/FEMA](https://facebook.com/FEMA), [fema.gov/blog](http://fema.gov/blog) and the flood information pages at <http://wvflood.com/Pages/default.aspx> .

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### **West Virginia survivors coping with emotional stress of storm and flooding—Pg. 3**

*West Virginians seeking information about disaster-related services and unmet needs should call **West Virginia 211**, a statewide information and referral service. Contact **211** for help finding food, childcare, crisis counseling, and many other resources in your local community. The West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) has set up a hotline for flood survivors: **800-451-1954**. Volunteers who wish to help with flood response and recovery may sign up at [wyflood.com](http://wyflood.com) or [wvvoad.org](http://wvvoad.org).*

*All FEMA disaster assistance will be provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), religion, national origin, age, disability, limited English proficiency, economic status, or retaliation. If you believe your civil rights are being violated, call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585(TTY/TDD).*

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