

# WEATHERING THE STORM: Coping with the Effects of Hurricane Helene

There is no right or wrong way to feel in response to the trauma of a hurricane. People can experience a wide range of emotions before and after a disaster or traumatic event.

It is important to recognize the signs of emotional distress and find healthy ways to cope. Self-care and identifying support systems can make a big difference. People can experience a wide range of emotions before and after a disaster or traumatic event.

## Steps to Care for Yourself

- Connect
  - Connect with others and create space to share your feelings. Maintain connections wherever possible and rely on supports as needed.
- Stay Informed
  - Watch for news updates from reliable officials but avoid excessive exposure to coverage of the event.
- Take Care of Your Body
  - Try to eat healthy, stay active, breathe mindfully, find time to rest, and avoid alcohol and other drugs. Take Breaks.
- Take Breaks
  - Make time to decompress. Focus on a different activity or task to give your mind a rest.
- Ask for Help
  - Talk to someone you trust. This could be a clergy member, mental health professional, or doctor.

## How to Help Your Children

- Talk with them
  - Share age-appropriate information
  - Reassure them
  - Address rumors
  - Answer questions
- Set a good example by taking care of yourself
- Limit exposure to media and social media coverage of the event

## Common Signs of Distress

- Overwhelming feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**Seek help if any of these interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row. See contact information below for resources.**

### Support for Mental Health (free, confidential, 24/7)

**Disaster Distress Helpline:** Anyone impacted by Hurricane Helene can call or text 1-800-985-5990 (Español presiona “2”) for crisis support services. Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL callers, please call using your preferred relay provider.

**988 Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988 to speak with a trained mental health professional (English and Spanish)

**Peer Warmline:** Call 1-855-733-7762 to speak to a peer with lived experience.

### Support for First Responders (free, confidential, 24/7)

**Hope4NC:** Any first responder or volunteer can call 1-855-587-3463 to receive mental health support.

### Information and Resources for People with Disabilities

**Disability Disaster Hotline:** Call 1-800-626-4959 or email [hotline@disasterstrategies.org](mailto:hotline@disasterstrategies.org) to get information, referrals, and guidance specific to people with disabilities and their families during disasters. Available 24/7.

