



From inConfidence™, your Employee and Family Assistance Program:

HOW DEALING WITH A NATURAL DISASTER CAN AFFECT YOU

In light of the current crisis related to the impact of the recent floods, many people are feeling anxious and worried about the consequences of this disaster. People who are most affected will experience, to some degree, loss of control and influence regarding what is happening. As such, the impact of these types of environmental disasters tends to result in possible feelings of insecurity and collective vulnerability.

Many people find that other experiences with personal crisis or trauma have helped them develop coping skills which may prove beneficial in managing their reactions to the current situation. Others, however, may find that they are experiencing some of the same reactions but with increased intensity or frequency. This can also be influenced by the degree to which personal safety and security have been threatened by traumatic events in the past.

Disasters have a tendency to bring communities closer together. During these events, people can also value the support of their neighbours, co-workers and emergency personnel. Some of you may be more affected than others, and for a few, having intense reactions may be a possibility. If you happen to be one of those who is managing well, give yourself credit and remember that your colleagues may still require your support. On the other hand, if you are experiencing more intense reactions, the following information will help you understand and cope with the crisis.

WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

While most of us are resilient, feeling worried, stressed and anxious is a normal reaction during this kind of crisis. Reactions vary from one person to another depending on the personal impact of the event. Here are some common reactions you may experience:

- Feelings of insecurity about the devastating outcome of these floods, their direct impact on your family and friends.
- You will likely find yourself focusing on your personal safety and the safety of those you care about. As a result, you may be taking extra precautions, in and outside the workplace, for you, your family, and friends.
- You may feel understandably upset and worried about loss of property and major disruptions to your life.
- You may become more irritable than usual, and find you are having frequent mood swings.
- You might have repeated and vivid memories related to past natural disasters or traumatic events in your life. These may occur for no apparent reason and may lead to physical reactions such as rapid heartbeat or sweating.
- You may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions, or may become more easily disoriented.



- You may find yourself questioning the uncertain and unpredictable nature of this crisis. Sleep and eating patterns may be disrupted.
- Some individuals may become withdrawn and isolated and want to avoid their usual activities.
- Symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension and stomach upset often accompany extreme stress.
- On a positive note, you may find yourself developing new connections and relationships, as the community comes together for mutual support.

HOW LONG WILL YOUR REACTIONS LAST?

- Natural disasters where there is the threat of, or actual physical injury, financial insecurity or significant property loss, may take longer to overcome.
- It is difficult to accurately predict how long your reactions will last. Most people report that intense reactions diminish over time, after the crisis subsides.
- If you are experiencing other emotionally difficult situations, such as serious health problems, family difficulties or other job stress, you may need more time to recover.

SELF-CARE

There are a number of steps you can take to help restore a sense of personal control. Some of the more important ones include the following:

- Seek support from people who care about you and who will listen and empathize with your situation. But keep in mind that your usual support systems may be experiencing some the same strong emotional reactions.
- Communicate your experience in whatever ways feel comfortable to you - such as by talking with family or close friends, or keeping a diary.
- It is important to take good care of yourself by eating healthy foods, resting and sleeping, and listening to your body's needs. If sleep disturbance continues to be a problem you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques and exercise.
- Avoid alcohol or non-prescription drugs.
- Establish or re-establish routines. As much as possible, allow yourself the opportunity for enjoyable activities.
- While, for some, important decisions need to be made during this time, it is better to postpone long-term decisions, where possible, until you are feeling emotionally more settled.

The Benefits of *inConfidence™*, your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

Sometimes just talking to a professional EFAP counsellor can help you regain a healthy perspective on the traumatic event you've just experienced. EFAP is a free, totally confidential service available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can reach us anytime by calling us at **1-866-347-2067**.

Visit our online services at www.inconfidence.ca