



From inConfidence™, your Employee and Family Assistance Program:

THE IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS

Information for Concerned Family and Friends

Your family member or friend has just been affected directly or indirectly by the recent floods in New Brunswick and this communication was intended to give you some information on how to best assist them.

The impact of this kind of environmental disaster may result in feelings of insecurity and vulnerability for the people you care about. It is normal for individuals to experience a wide range of reactions during and following this traumatic event. These reactions may include:

- Emotional (anger, sadness, anxiety and helplessness)
- Physical (head or back aches, muscle tension, upset stomach, exhaustion)
- Behavioural (changes in appetite or sleeping patterns, irritability, withdrawal)
- Thinking process (forgetfulness, decreased concentration etc.)

These reactions can occur immediately or be delayed. They can also fluctuate in intensity. It is important to remember that these are normal reactions to a prolonged and difficult crisis. The care and support you give at this time is important and valued by family and friends.

How you can help

1. Listen sympathetically even if you don't fully understand their reactions.
2. Do not talk the person out of their feelings. You can tell them you are sorry for what they are experiencing and ask them how you can support and assist them.
3. Do not minimize their experience. Do not make false promises to suggest "everything will be O.K."
4. Respect their possible need for personal space and private time.
5. Ask what else you can do that s/he would consider helpful. Where possible, provide supportive suggestions in a respectful manner.
6. Try not to take their anger, irritation or other feelings personally.



7. Do not encourage the person who has been affected to leave their job or make any impulsive decisions. As much as possible, major life changes should be held off until the intense impact of the trauma subsides.
8. Should your family member or friend be experiencing a need for additional support, respectfully suggest resources such as family, doctor, local mental health facility or their EFAP.

How you can support children concerned about relatives and friends

1. Speak with children in an open and honest manner, keeping in mind their age level. **Keep it Simple.**
2. Remain calm and provide reassurance that the affected family member or friend is safe. It is normal for children to express their concern for the safety of family members and friends.
3. Explain that the affected person(s) is going through a difficult experience and it is normal for them to be upset. Tell children things usually get better after the crisis subsides.
4. Encourage your children to express their concerns and to ask any questions. It is important not to dismiss their feelings. Consult your local library and children's book store for an appropriate book, if needed.
5. Be alert to any major change you observe with your children during this time. Make yourself available. Seek professional assistance, should your children exhibit prolonged signs of distress.

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

You and others around you may also develop some reactions after hearing about the traumatic event. It is common to feel concerned or upset that someone you care about has been affected in this way. Sometimes the stress of this situation can add to other stresses that may already exist. If you are concerned that this may be happening to you, your family, or is affecting your relationships, please remember that professional assistance is always available.

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 **1-866-347-2067**.

Visit our online services at www.inconfidence.ca