

A Moment of Self-Reliant Wisdom

Topic: **Coping with Crisis I**

Learning objective: Family support is critical before, during and after a traumatic or disastrous event. Discuss with family, extended family, friends and trusted neighbors the importance of developing a support-net to help in coping with disaster. For each individual who may suffer from a stressful reaction, due to the effects of a crisis event, a support-net is vital.

Physical and emotional reactions often occur as a result of a traumatic event such as a natural emergency or a terrorist attack. These reactions may happen immediately, weeks or months after an event. Traumatic stress reactions can happen to people of any age and can change a person's behavior, thoughts and physical health. A support-net may help to lessen common responses and calm anxiety and fear.



Common Responses

The physical effects caused by a traumatic event may include:

- ❖ Rapid heartbeat
- ❖ Increased respiratory rate
- ❖ Shortness of breath
- ❖ Nausea
- ❖ Muscle and joint aches
- ❖ Tremors
- ❖ Headaches

Seek medical attention if any of these symptoms persist.

Thoughts, behaviors and emotions may also change. These changes include:

- ❖ Flashbacks are re-experiencing the event
- ❖ Withdrawal from normal social relations
- ❖ Performance problems at work or school
- ❖ Loss or increase in appetite
- ❖ Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- ❖ Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, numb
- ❖ Being extremely anxious, fearful, agitated or irritable
- ❖ Feeling depressed
- ❖ Increased consumption of alcohol prescribed over-the-counter or illicit drugs.

Clergy and local officials are the best sources of information. Follow their instructions during and after emergencies regarding sheltering, food and water, clean up and emotional-crisis intervention

