



# Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health:

## TIPS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINE, AND ISOLATION DURING AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

### What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters may close, and sports events and religious services may be cancelled.

### What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.

### What Is Isolation?

Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

## Introduction

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, local officials may require the public to take measures to limit and control the spread of the disease. This tip sheet provides information about **social distancing, quarantine, and isolation**. The government has the right to enforce federal and state laws related to public health if people

within the country get sick with highly contagious diseases that have the potential to develop into outbreaks or pandemics.

This tip sheet describes feelings and thoughts you may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. It also suggests ways to care for your behavioral health during these experiences and provides resources for more help.

## What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. People may feel:

- **Anxiety, worry, or fear** related to:
  - Your own health status
  - The health status of others whom you may have exposed to the disease
  - The resentment that your friends and family may feel if they need to go into quarantine as a result of contact with you
  - The experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of the disease
  - Time taken off from work and the potential loss of income and job security
  - The challenges of securing things you need, such as groceries and personal care items

- **Concern** about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care
  - **Uncertainty or frustration** about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future
  - **Loneliness** associated with feeling cut off from the world and from loved ones
  - **Anger** if you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence
  - **Boredom and frustration** because you may not be able to work or engage in regular day-to-day activities
  - **Uncertainty or ambivalence** about the situation
  - **A desire to use alcohol or drugs** to cope
  - **Symptoms of depression**, such as feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, or sleeping too little or too much
  - **Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, such as intrusive distressing memories, flashbacks (reliving the event), nightmares, changes in thoughts and mood, and being easily startled
- Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure. Avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this tends to increase anxiety and worry. Remember that children are especially affected by what they hear and see on television.
  - Look to credible sources for information on the infectious disease outbreak (see page 3 for sources of reliable outbreak-related information).

## BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

Speaking out about your needs is particularly important if you are in quarantine, since you may not be in a hospital or other facility where your basic needs are met. Ensure you have what you need to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

- Work with local, state, or national health officials to find out how you can arrange for groceries and toiletries to be delivered to your home as needed.
- Inform health care providers or health authorities of any needed medications and work with them to ensure that you continue to receive those medications.

If you or a loved one experience any of these reactions for 2 to 4 weeks or more, contact your health care provider or one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet.

## Ways To Support Yourself During Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation

### UNDERSTAND THE RISK

Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. The public perception of risk during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak is often inaccurate. Media coverage may create the impression that people are in immediate danger when really the risk for infection may be very low. Take steps to get the facts:

### EDUCATE YOURSELF

Health care providers and health authorities should provide information on the disease, its diagnosis, and treatment.

- Do not be afraid to ask questions—clear communication with a health care provider may help reduce any distress associated with social distancing, quarantine, or isolation.
- Ask for written information when available.
- Ask a family member or friend to obtain information in the event that you are unable to secure this information on your own.

### WORK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER TO REDUCE FINANCIAL STRESS

If you're unable to work during this time, you may experience stress related to your job status or financial situation.

- Provide your employer with a clear explanation of why you are away from work.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Labor toll-free at 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243) about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows U.S. employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for serious medical conditions, or to care for a family member with a serious medical condition.
- Contact your utility providers, cable and Internet provider, and other companies from whom you get monthly bills to explain your situation and request alternative bill payment arrangements as needed.
- If approved by health authorities and your health care providers, arrange for your friends and loved ones to bring you newspapers, movies, and books.
- Sign up for emergency alerts via text or email to ensure you get updates as soon as they are available.
- Call SAMHSA's free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.
- Use the Internet, radio, and television to keep up with local, national, and world events.
- If you need to connect with someone because of an ongoing alcohol or drug problem, consider calling your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous offices.

## Sources for Reliable Outbreak-Related Information

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027  
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)  
<http://www.cdc.gov>

### World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization  
525 23rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-974-3000  
<http://www.who.int/en>

## CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. You can:

- Use the telephone, email, text messaging, and social media to connect with friends, family, and others.
- Talk “face to face” with friends and loved ones using Skype or FaceTime.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you are in a medical facility, you may have access to health care providers who can answer your questions. However, if you are quarantined at home, and you're worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider:

- Ask your provider whether it would be possible to schedule remote appointments via Skype or FaceTime for mental health, substance use, or physical health needs.
- In the event that your doctor is unavailable and you are feeling stressed or are in crisis, call the hotline numbers listed at the end of this tip sheet for support.

## USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO COPE AND RELAX

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, or engage in activities you enjoy.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do something fun after a hard task.

- Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends, if you find it helpful.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking; consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.

## After Social Distancing, Quarantine, or Isolation

You may experience mixed emotions, including a sense of relief. If you were isolated because you had the illness, you may feel sadness or anger because friends and loved ones may have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious.

The best way to end this common fear is to learn about the disease and the actual risk to others. Sharing this information will often calm fears in others and allow you to reconnect with them.

If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of extreme stress—such as trouble sleeping, problems with eating too much or too little, inability to carry out routine daily activities, or using drugs or alcohol to cope—speak to a health care provider or call one of the hotlines listed to the right for a referral.

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If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

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## Helpful Resources

### Hotlines

#### SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablamos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/espanol.aspx>

#### SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx>

### Treatment Locator

#### Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home>

#### SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: [DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

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*\*Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

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# DISTRESS HELPLINE

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990 TEXT "TalkWithUs" TO 66746

*The occurrence of natural and man-made disasters has increased in the U.S and its territories by 39% over the past decade.<sup>1</sup> The psychological impact these events have on a significant proportion of people who experience them<sup>2</sup> suggests / illustrates the need for a disaster hotline network with the capacity to provide disaster crisis counseling, information and referral in any part of the country with immediacy.*

The **Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH)** is the nation's first hotline dedicated to providing disaster crisis counseling. The toll-free Helpline operates 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week. This free, confidential and multilingual, crisis support service is available via telephone (1-800-985-5990) and SMS (Text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746) to U.S. residents who are experiencing psychological distress as a result of a natural or man-made disasters. Callers are connected to trained and caring professionals from the closest crisis counseling center in the network. The helpline staff provides confidential counseling, referrals and other needed support services.

When disaster strikes, people react with increased anxiety, worry and anger. With support from community and family, most of us bounce back. However, "Some may need extra assistance to cope with unfolding events and uncertainties," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "People seeking emotional help in the aftermath of a disaster can now call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 and begin the process of recovery."

Individuals affected by natural or man-made disasters, incidents of mass violence, or any other disasters and who are experiencing distress at any time before, during or after such disasters can access help easily by calling 1-800-985-5990 or by texting *TalkWithUs* to 66746 (Spanish-speakers can text '*Hablanos*'), 24/7. Calls and texts are answered by trained crisis counselors at local or regional crisis centers in the DDH network. These counselors provide emotional support, information & resources related to stress and healthy coping, as well as referrals for federal, state and local services specific to disasters as they occur.

The DDH is a project funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is operated by Link2Health Solutions, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mental Health Association of New York City. Link2Health Solutions, Inc. runs the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is also funded by SAMHSA. Please visit SAMHSA's website at [www.samhsa.gov/disaster](http://www.samhsa.gov/disaster) for additional information and resources related to disaster behavioral health.

## **Helpline: 1-800-985-5990**

- Free
- Multilingual
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## **SMS: Text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746**

- Standard text messaging/  
data rates apply
- Spanish-speakers can text '*Hablanos*'  
to 66746
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.fema.gov/news/disaster\\_totals\\_annual.fema](http://www.fema.gov/news/disaster_totals_annual.fema)

<sup>2</sup> Norris, F.H., Friedman, M.J. and Watson, P.J. *60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part II. Summary and Implications of the Disaster Mental Health Research*, Psychiatry 65(3) Fall 2002 240

# Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990  
TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

## Disaster Distress Helpline

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**Call 1-800-985-5990  
or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746**  
to get help and support  
for any distress that you or someone  
you care about may be feeling  
related to any disaster.

The **Helpline** and **Text Service** are:

- Available 24 hours a day,  
7 days a week, year-round
- Free (standard data/text messaging  
rates may apply for the texting service)
- Answered by trained crisis counselors.

TTY for Deaf / Hearing Impaired:  
**1-800-846-8517**

Spanish-speakers:  
**Text "Hablanos" to 66746**

# Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990  
TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

**If you or someone you  
know is struggling  
after a disaster,  
you are not alone.**



*"Ever since the tornado,  
I haven't been able to get a full  
night's sleep ..."*

*"I can't get the sounds of  
the gunshots out of my mind..."*

*"Things haven't been the same  
since my shop was flooded ..."*

**Talk With Us!**

 **Call us:**  
**1-800-985-5990**

 **Text:**  
**'TalkWithUs' to 66746**

 **Visit:**  
<http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

 **Like us on  
Facebook:**  
[http://facebook.com/  
distresshelpline](http://facebook.com/distresshelpline)

 **Follow us on  
Twitter (@distressline):**  
<http://twitter.com/distressline>



Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Dept. of Health  
and Human Services (HHS).

# Disaster Distress Helpline

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## Disasters have the potential to cause *emotional distress*.

Some are more at risk than others:

- Survivors living or working in the impacted areas (youth & adults)
- Loved ones of victims
- First Responders, Rescue & Recovery Workers.

## Stress, anxiety, and depression are common reactions after a disaster.

Warning signs of distress may include:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Stomachaches or headaches
- Anger, feeling edgy or lashing out at others
- Overwhelming sadness
- Worrying a lot of the time; feeling guilty but not sure why
- Feeling like you have to keep busy
- Lack of energy or always feeling tired
- Drinking alcohol, smoking or using tobacco more than usual; using illegal drugs
- Eating too much or too little
- Not connecting with others
- Feeling like you won't ever be happy again.

## TIPS FOR COPING WITH STRESS AFTER A DISASTER:

**Take care of yourself.** Try to eat healthy, avoid using alcohol and drugs, and get some exercise when you can- even a walk around the block can make a difference.

**Reach out to friends and family.** Talk to someone you trust about how you are doing.

**Talk to your children.** They may feel scared, angry, sad, worried, and confused. Let them know it's okay to talk about what's on their mind. Limit their watching of TV news reports about the disaster. Help children and teens maintain normal routines to the extent possible. Role model healthy coping.

**Get enough 'good' sleep.** Some people have trouble falling asleep after a disaster, others keep waking up during the night.

If you have trouble sleeping:

- Only go to bed when you are ready to sleep
- Don't watch TV or use your cell phone or laptop computer while you're in bed
- Avoid eating (especially sugar) or drinking caffeine or alcohol at least one hour before going to bed
- If you wake up and can't fall back to sleep, try writing in a journal or on a sheet of paper what's on your mind.

**Take care of pets or get outside into nature when it's safe.** Nature and animals can help us to feel better when we are down. See if you can volunteer at a local animal shelter- they may need help after a disaster. Once it's safe to return to public parks or natural areas, find a quiet spot to sit in or go for a hike.



**Know when to ask for help.** Signs of stress can be normal, short-term reactions to any of life's unexpected events- not only after surviving a disaster, but also after a death in the family, the loss of a job, or a breakup.

It's important to pay attention to what's going on with you or with someone you care about, because what may seem like "everyday stress" can actually be:

- Depression (including having thoughts of suicide)
- Anxiety
- Alcohol or Drug Abuse.

**If you or someone you know may be depressed, suffering from overwhelming feelings of anxiety, or possibly abusing alcohol or drugs ...**

**Call 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746.**

**You Are Not Alone.**