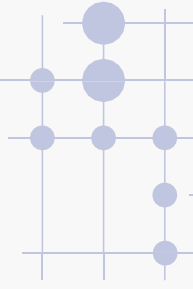


Mental Health & Emotional Well-Being During Emergencies and Disasters





Mental Health & Emotional Well-Being During Emergencies and Disasters

Emergencies and disasters — severe weather events, public health emergencies, accidents, technological incidents, or geopolitical crises — can affect emotional and psychological well-being in significant ways. Fear, uncertainty, disruption of routines, concern for loved ones, exposure to distressing information, and changes in daily life may all increase emotional stress.

Protecting mental health during emergencies is an essential part of overall health and safety. Emotional well-being affects decision-making, physical health, family relationships, work performance, and the ability to cope during difficult situations.

This guide aims to help individuals and families understand emotional reactions during crises, recognize when support may be needed, and learn healthy coping strategies that strengthen resilience and recovery.

Emotional Reactions During Emergencies Are Normal

People react differently to stressful situations. Some individuals may feel calm initially and develop stress later, while others may experience immediate emotional reactions.

Common emotional and psychological reactions during emergencies may include:

- Fear and anxiety
- Worry about family safety
- Stress or emotional tension
- Sadness or grief
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep problems or nightmares
- Irritability or anger
- Feeling emotionally overwhelmed
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Social withdrawal
- Increased emotional sensitivity

These reactions are normal responses to stressful situations and often improve with time, support, and healthy coping strategies.



Certain groups may experience greater emotional impact, including:

- Children and adolescents
- Older adults
- Individuals with chronic illnesses
- People living alone
- Healthcare workers and emergency responders
- Individuals with previous mental health conditions



Supporting Emotional Well-Being at Home

Maintaining emotional stability during emergencies helps reduce panic and improves resilience within families and communities.

Helpful strategies include:

- Maintaining regular daily routines whenever possible
- Staying connected with supportive family and friends
- Eating balanced meals and staying hydrated
- Getting enough sleep and rest
- Limiting exposure to distressing media content
- Taking breaks from social media and news updates
- Engaging in light physical activity when safe
- Spending time in calming activities such as reading, prayer, hobbies, or relaxation exercises

Small daily habits can help improve emotional balance during stressful situations.

Managing News and Social Media Exposure

Continuous exposure to alarming news, rumors, graphic images, or misinformation may increase anxiety and emotional exhaustion.

Recommendations:

- Follow updates from official government and health authorities only
- Avoid continuously monitoring news throughout the day
- Set specific times to check updates
- Avoid sharing unverified information
- Encourage children to avoid excessive exposure to distressing media coverage

Following trusted information sources can reduce confusion and improve emotional reassurance.

Supporting Children During Emergencies

Children may express stress differently than adults. Some children may become more fearful, withdrawn, irritable, or emotionally sensitive.

Common signs of stress in children may include:

- Increased clinginess
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Fear of separation from parents
- Changes in appetite
- Irritability or emotional outbursts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal from normal activities

🏠 Stay calm and seek the appropriate level of care.

Ways families can support children:

- Speak calmly and honestly using age-appropriate language
- Reassure children that adults are working to keep them safe
- Maintain daily routines as much as possible
- Encourage children to express feelings and ask questions
- Spend positive time together as a family
- Limit children's exposure to distressing news coverage

Children often feel safer when adults remain calm and emotionally supportive.

Supporting Older Adults and Vulnerable Individuals

Older adults and vulnerable individuals may experience additional emotional challenges during emergencies, including loneliness, confusion, fear, or difficulty accessing support and information.

Families and communities are encouraged to:

- Check regularly on elderly relatives and neighbors
- Help vulnerable individuals obtain medications and supplies
- Assist with communication and transportation when needed
- Encourage social interaction and emotional reassurance

Community solidarity and support are essential during crises.

Healthy Coping Strategies

Simple coping techniques may help reduce stress and improve emotional well-being.

Helpful techniques include:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Gentle stretching or physical activity
- Relaxation exercises
- Prayer or spiritual reflection
- Journaling or creative activities
- Listening to calming music
- Talking with supportive family members or friends

Maintaining healthy routines and focusing on manageable daily activities may improve emotional resilience.

Signs That Additional Support May Be Needed

While emotional stress is common during emergencies, some symptoms may require professional support if they become severe or persistent.

Seek professional help if you or someone you know experiences:

- Severe anxiety or panic attacks
- Persistent sadness or hopelessness
- Inability to perform normal daily activities
- Severe sleep disturbances
- Intense emotional distress
- Withdrawal from family or community
- Thoughts of self-harm or harming others
- Significant behavioral changes

Early support may help prevent emotional difficulties from becoming more severe.

Mental Health Support Services Available in the UAE

The UAE provides several mental health support services and helplines that offer confidential emotional support and guidance.

24/7 SAKINA Mental Health Support Hotline – Abu Dhabi

The Department of Health – Abu Dhabi launched the 800-SAKINA hotline to provide immediate psychological support and emotional guidance in Arabic and English. The service is available 24 hours a day and supports adults, children, and families experiencing stress, anxiety, panic, or emotional distress.

Contact:

- Q 800-SAKINA (800-725462)

Q UAE National Mental Support Line – 800 HOPE

The UAE Mental Support Line provides confidential emotional support through trained volunteers and mental health professionals. Support is available by phone and WhatsApp for UAE residents.

Contact:

- Q 800-HOPE (800-4673)

Service Website:

[Mental Support Line UAE](#)

Dubai “Itma’en” Mental Wellbeing Service

Dubai Health recently launched the Itma’en service to provide free and confidential emotional support and wellbeing guidance for residents and visitors in Dubai. The service is available in Arabic and English.

Contact:

- Q 800506



Emirates Health Services Mental Health Support

Emirates Health Services provides mental health services through outpatient clinics, counseling services, and specialized facilities including psychiatric and community mental health services.

Mental Health Services:

[EHS Mental Health Services](#)

Mental Health Awareness Resources:

[EHS Mental Health Awareness Center](#)

Supporting Others During Emergencies

Helping others can strengthen emotional resilience across the community.

You can support others by:

- Listening calmly and respectfully
- Encouraging people to seek support when needed
- Checking on vulnerable neighbors or relatives
- Sharing accurate information from official sources
- Avoiding judgment or stigma related to emotional struggles

Simple acts of support can make a significant difference during stressful situations.

Follow Trusted Official Sources

For accurate updates and guidance, follow trusted official authorities such as:

- National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority
- Emirates Health Services
- UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention
- Department of Health – Abu Dhabi

Avoid sharing rumors or unverified information.

Emergency Numbers in the UAE

- Police: 999
- Ambulance: 998
- Civil Defense: 997

Key Message

Mental health is an important part of overall health and safety during emergencies. Staying calm, maintaining healthy routines, supporting one another, limiting exposure to distressing information, and seeking help when needed can strengthen emotional resilience and improve recovery for individuals, families, and communities.

Thanks



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