

Coping With Holiday Stress After a Disaster

Release Date: December 18, 2023

Holidays can bring back memories of happier times that are no longer possible after a natural disaster. If you are feeling anxious, lonely or uncertain about the future, you are not alone. You can reach out for help. The holidays may bring increased stress as traditional celebrations will look different due to the hurricanes, this may be an especially difficult time.

According to the Mayo Clinic, stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life. A small amount of stress can be good, motivating you to perform well. But many challenges daily, such as sitting in traffic, meeting deadlines and paying bills, can push you beyond your ability to cope. For more information click on: [Stress management basics](#).

Disasters can especially leave children feeling frightened, confused, and insecure. Whether a child has personally experienced the hurricane damage, has seen the event on television, or has heard it discussed by adults, it is important for parents and teachers to be informed and ready to help if reactions to stress begin to occur. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, symptoms of depression may include:

- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness, pessimism and hopelessness
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed

2-1-1 Helpline

Floridians experiencing stress due to the disaster may call the state call center (352) 332-4636 or text your zip code to 898-211 for support.



FEMA

Page 1 of 3

2-1-1 is the special abbreviated telephone number reserved as an easy-to-remember number meant to provide information and referrals to health, human, and social service organizations.

In addition to guiding callers to crisis counselors, dialing 2-1-1 also provides individuals and families in need with information about where to find social services such as supplemental food and nutrition programs, shelter and housing options, services for veterans, and healthcare information.

The call centers are also designed to assist those who do not speak English, those with limited reading skills, and those who are new to their communities. The United Way operates or funds 70 percent of 2-1-1 centers.

The National Disaster Distress Helpline

The National Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH), funded by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), also provides crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. Support is available to all residents of the U.S. experiencing stress or mental health concerns related to any natural or human-caused disaster through the National Disaster Distress Helpline (call or text 1-800-985-5990; for Spanish, press "2"). The helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Callers can connect with DDH hotline counselors in 100+ additional languages via third-party interpretation services. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use the text option. To connect directly to an agent in American Sign Language, click the "ASL Now" button from the SAMHSA website (below) or call 1-800-985-5990 from your videophone. ASL Support is available 24/7. For more information, please visit: <https://www.samhsa.gov/>

Other Coping Resources

- Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7, text-based mental health support and crisis intervention. Visit www.crisistextline.org or Text HOME to 741741.
- American Red Cross Virtual Family Assistance Center: Call 833-492-0094.
- Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline: Call 800-962-2873.



FEMA

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 800-799-7233 or text START to 88788.
- National Sexual Assault Helpline: Call 800-656-HOPE.

For the latest information on Florida's recovery from Hurricane Idalia, visit floridadisaster.org/info and fema.gov Follow FEMA on X, formerly known as Twitter, at [FEMA Region 4 \(@femaregion4\)](https://twitter.com/femaregion4) and at facebook.com/fema.



FEMA