

# COPING WITH THE IMPACT OF FLOODING

*Rural Adversity Mental Health Program*

R A M H P . C O M . A U

## *Normal responses to a flood*

Flooding can have a big impact on individuals and communities. It is normal to experience all sorts of emotions, feel fearful or overwhelmed during or after the clean up.

During and following a flood it is common for people to:

- Feel stressed
- Experience flashbacks or unwanted memories of the rain/flood
- Feel overwhelming loss or grief when returning home
- Feel anxious as the body goes into 'fight' or 'flight' mode to stay safe
- Experience sadness, anger or guilt
- Have difficulty sleeping

## *Self-care strategies*

### DURING A FLOOD

- keep the family together
- remember to rest and eat
- set a manageable schedule
- focus on what you can control
- reassure children
- listen and validate children's concerns
- explain the disaster factually
- watch for signs of stress
- take care of yourself
- ask for help

### FOLLOWING A FLOOD

- talk to friends, family and neighbours about their experience
- discuss your problems
- accept help when it's offered
- investigate what financial assistance you may be eligible for
- seek support from welfare agencies
- rely on official information from reputable sources
- take a break from social media if need be

## *When to get help*

While it's normal to feel distressed or upset by what has happened and the losses that have occurred, you should see a mental health professional for assistance if you are experiencing:

- extreme feelings of distress
- emotional reactions that are lasting longer than a few weeks
- distress that is interfering with your ability to carry out day-to-day activities
- withdrawal from usual relationships
- avoiding pleasurable activities
- feelings of overwhelming fear for no apparent reason
- panic symptoms (e.g. racing heart, lightheadedness, breathing difficulties)
- avoiding usual activities because they bring back unwanted memories
- feelings of excessive guilt
- using alcohol or other substances to cope
- a loss of interest in the future
- thoughts of self-harm or suicide

## Where to get help

**If you or someone else you know is in immediate danger, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.**

- General practitioners (GPs) for advice, treatment, Mental Health Treatment plan or referral
- Specialised mental health clinicians & services, such as psychologists, social workers, mental health nurses or psychiatrists (can be referred by a GP)
- Online counselling & information services  
[beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)  
[redcross.org.au](http://redcross.org.au)  
[phoenixaustralia.org](http://phoenixaustralia.org) - trauma support  
[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au) - youth aged 5-25  
[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) - youth aged 12-25  
[disasterassist.gov.au](http://disasterassist.gov.au)
- Telephone support services  
NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511  
Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800  
Suicide Callback Service 1300 659 467  
Beyond Blue Support 1300 224 636  
Lifeline 13 11 14  
Mensline 1300 78 99 79

For more information and resources about **supporting children** during and following a natural disaster, go to [emergingminds.com.au](http://emergingminds.com.au)



Contact your local RAMHP Coordinator at [ramhp.com.au](http://ramhp.com.au). They can listen, provide support and help connect people to services and clinicians in their local area

Online support - for more information and support with the floods go to [www.service.nsw.gov.au/floods](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/floods)

Complete the DPI and LLS Disaster Damage Survey - go to [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/nda](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/nda)

## Other useful links

It is important to stay healthy during a flood and while cleaning up. For more information on staying safe visit [www.health.nsw.gov.au/emergency\\_preparedness\\_weather/Pages/storms-and-floods.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/emergency_preparedness_weather/Pages/storms-and-floods.aspx)

Information for assistance with flood relief can be found on the NSW Council of Social Services website [www.ncoss.org.au/sector-hub/sector-resources/flood-relief-assistance-resource/](http://www.ncoss.org.au/sector-hub/sector-resources/flood-relief-assistance-resource/)

Natural disaster assistance is available to help communities and individuals directly affected by flood, fire, storm damage or any other declared natural disaster. You can apply for Disaster Assistance with the Rural Assistance Authority [www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance)



Health

CONNECT WITH US:



E: [ramhp@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:ramhp@newcastle.edu.au)  
W: [www.ramhp.com.au](http://www.ramhp.com.au)