The Stresses of Flooding: Safeguard Your Emotional Well-being

When we think of flooding, we mostly think of loss of property and not mental health. But there is also an emotional toll that occurs when individuals experience a flooding event.



Feelings of anxiety, worry, fear, depression or post-traumatic stress can affect all people involved in a flooding event including flood survivors, first responders and recovery workers.

A medical journal published by Carla Stanke and associates states that, "While most people who are involved in disasters recover with the support of their families, friends and colleagues, the effects on some people's health, relationships and welfare can be extensive and sustained. Flooding can pose substantial social and mental health problems that may continue over extended periods of time," and can worsen in individuals already dealing with mental illness, substance abuse, legal issues, and homelessness.

We have to be cognizant that everyone processes traumatic experiences in different ways and that all feelings are valid. The best way we can help is to listen, offer support, and to connect them to the available resources that will help lead to the path of healing.



How well or quickly someone recovers emotionally from a disaster can depend on how well and quickly they recover in other, more tangible ways. "It's not just initial exposure" to a flood or wildfire, said Sarah Lowe, a psychologist and professor at Yale School of Public Health. "It's more than that: dealing with bureaucracies, finding someplace else to live, financial impacts."

While experiencing a flood is the primary cause of stress for people who are affected, it is important to remember that the stress and strain associated with dealing with cleaning up and recovery may also be a

problem.

Good social support can protect against the negative psychosocial impacts of experiencing a flood. It is important to make connections, access available resources, and reach out to disaster service agencies, who will help with your ongoing needs and aid in furthering your emotional well-being.

The State of Iowa has many resources for community members to access. Below are statements from various local agencies regarding their roles and services. You can learn more by clicking on each of their links.



Seek Additional Help. You are not alone!

Disaster Distress Helpline



Call or text 1-800-985-5990 for support and counseling. The <u>Disaster Distress Helpline</u> is a national hotline that provides 24/7, year-round crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster.

This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Calls and texts are answered by

trained, caring counselors from crisis call centers located throughout the United States.

Iowa Disaster Behavioral Health Response Teams

The <u>lowa Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team</u> is a trained team of volunteers who can mobilize resources to provide post-disaster mental health services statewide.

The goal of the Iowa DBHRT is to provide an organized response to individual victims, family members, volunteers, responders, survivors, or the community affected by critical incidents or disasters.



Local authorities may request Iowa DBHRT assistance in order to meet the behavioral health needs of communities in crisis by contacting the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Duty Officer at 515-725-3231 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Iowa Legal Aid Disaster Relief

<u>lowa Legal Aid Disaster Relief</u> provides various services to assist lowans who are experiencing difficulties due to a natural disaster. Such resources include, but are not limited to, utility assistance, food assistance, eviction/rent assistance, disaster declarations, housing issues, and mental health assistance.

If you are experiencing the effects of a disaster, you may face many different legal problems. The <u>lowa Legal Aid Disaster Relief App</u> is designed to help people by providing tools to prepare in advance for a disaster and for people who are currently experiencing the effects of a disaster.



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Clip ART courtesy of the following websites:

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