

The Calm after the Storm: Emotionally Surviving a Natural Disaster



As communities in Eastern Kentucky and Southern Indiana begin to rebuild communities, there have been several emotions that individuals may feel. What started as an immediate state of shock after seeing destruction, is now starting to enter stages of grief. Grief is a healthy human response to important changes or loss. It is important that individuals try to understand grief in order to deal with the negative emotions that arise and in order to recover and grow from the loss.

If you or someone you know is living with substantial loss there are a few things that you can do to help.

1. Take care of Emotional Needs: Express feelings, accept help, ask for help, and be kind to yourself by not expecting yourself to function at the same level you did before the disaster.
2. Take Care of Physical Needs: Get plenty of rest and food to eat, and be alert for health problems such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, shortness of breath, unintended weight loss, etc and seek medical attention when necessary.

If you or someone you know is struggling with grief related to the local tragedies, look for sources of help and information. Local mental health counselors can help people understand their feelings and can help individuals, couples, and/or families adjust to their loss. Also, look for information or help from other organizations that may be providing post-disaster relief.

Emotions of Grief:

- Shock and Denial: Many individuals may first deny the loss or feel emotionally numb about the situation
- Anger: The loss may seem unfair and some individuals become angry with themselves and others for not doing more to prevent the magnitude of loss
- Guilt: Individuals will often blame themselves for something they did or didn't do prior to the loss
- Depression: People may feel drained and unable to perform routine tasks
- Loneliness: Feelings of fear and loneliness can accompany loss
- Hope: Eventually, many people will regain sense of hope

There are many ways that you yourself can help those suffering a devastating loss. Things you can do include:

1. Being a sympathetic listener
2. Being present if you can— physically help others out that are close to you if you can
3. Being patient with those trying to accept their loss
4. Providing practical assistance— assist with clean up efforts, meal preparation for victims of the disaster

Grief can take time and should not be expected to resolve itself over night. When dealing personally with grief or the grief of others do not fall victim to of these myths:

1. Tears are a sign of weakness: WRONG! Tears are a natural way to release intense feelings
1. Children should be sheltered from the grief: WRONG! Children should be allowed to grieve as well.
2. It is best to avoid talking about the loss: WRONG! People are often thankful when they can talk about their loss or fears

To volunteer to help with relief efforts go to:

MSUCaREs.volunteerhub.com

If any faculty/staff/student wants to talk to someone contact:

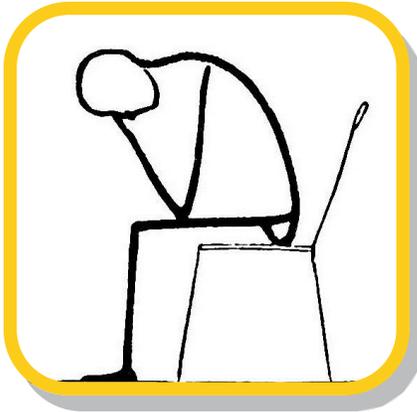
MSU Counseling Center

Allie Young Hall

(606) 783-2123

Information from Grief-Living with Loss by RealStyle Scriptography

I should have done...Why me? Survivor's Guilt after a Tragedy



When tragedy strikes, many individuals find themselves asking questions such as “why was I the lucky one?” or asking themselves why they did or didn’t do something. This is referred to as Survivor’s Guilt. Symptoms include feeling extremely sad or depressed, feeling helpless, and feeling as if your own undamaged self and lifestyle is a source of pain in itself when faced with the suffering of the many who have suffered so much loss.

What can you do?

- 1. Understand that there is nobody to blame when nature vents her fury–** Understand that often times everyone feels helpless in a natural disaster, especially those that result in loss of life.
- 2. Minimize your media intake–** If the constant stream of images are upsetting to you, decrease your exposure to these images whether it be on T.V., Internet, or Facebook.
- 3. Find ways to act constructively–** If you have skills that can aid in relief efforts, volunteer your time to help the relief crews. If not, you can offer friends and family a place to stay if they have lost everything; or you can help inform others about where to go to receive necessities such as shelter, food, or water.
- 4. Be a donor–** Donate money or items to a relief effort that is working the area. Also, if needed, donate blood to the local blood bank.
- 5. Check out Facebook groups–** Many disasters result in related facebook pages where individuals can leave their condolences, or find out information about what it is going on in the affected area. Select the ones that seem to resonate best with you and are expressing your heartfelt concerns and what you wish to get across. If there isn’t one, you may want to start a page.
- 6. Stay in touch with people you know in the disaster area–** Even when money or schedules are tight, just calling and talking to a disaster victim can be very helpful on their long road to recovering from the loss.

Information pulled from: How to Cope With Survivor's Guilt Following a Natural Disaster at <http://www.wikihow.com/Cope-With-Survivor's-Guilt-Following-a-Natural-Disaster>

Survivor's Guilt:

Victims may blame themselves or feel shame at having survived, when others didn't. There may be a pre-occupation with thoughts about the disaster and rumination over their own activities: Could they have acted differently? They may feel responsible for the unfortunate fate of others.

How Can YOU help those affected by the tornados????

Volunteering:

MSUCaREs.volunteerhub.com

Donations:

- American Red Cross: redcross.org
- Bank of the Mountains: bankofthemountains.com

To find out more information go to:

www.moreheadstate.edu