

## **Managing Stress During a Flood**

When floods threaten to disrupt individuals, families and communities, it's normal to experience a variety of emotions. A potential or actual disruption or loss of home, income and routine, combined with the dangers a flood can cause many different feelings – good and bad – including:

- panic or anxiety
- helplessness or despair
- anger
- disbelief
- generosity toward others
- co-operation/teamwork
- sleeplessness
- lack of concentration

### **How to manage**

It is important for people to pay attention to their emotions and those of family, friends and neighbors. There are several things people can do to cope during floods, including:

- Talk to others about your feelings and listen to them talk about their feelings.
- Support others by helping them sandbag, move furniture or pack things up to move or volunteer in some other way in the community.
- Take care of your own physical and emotional needs, and those of children or seniors, by making sure everyone eats a balanced diet, gets enough sleep and exercises when possible.
- Ask for help when you need it.

### **You and your family**

Families are better able to cope with the effects of flooding if they talk about what might happen and what action could be taken.

- Be clear about priorities. The health and safety of your family, friends and neighbors comes first.
- If your home is at risk of flooding, make an emergency plan that includes moving valuables and keepsakes to the highest floor of the house to protect them from flood damage.
- Discuss what will be taken if you need to evacuate and be realistic about it. Most people take items that can't be replaced, like photos, favourite toys, smaller family heirlooms and family treasures.
- Ensure everyone has a several-day supply of medications to take with you if you need to evacuate.
- Remind each other that strong feelings are normal under the circumstances.
- Acknowledge that you're all feeling stress and talk about how it may affect your relationships.
- Let each other know everyone's doing a good job in a difficult situation.
- Continue to laugh and enjoy each other's company.

### **If you need to evacuate**

In some parts of the province, evacuation may be necessary. Your local authorities will give you as much notice as possible. If you must evacuate:

- Try to set up a routine with as many familiar activities as possible.
- Plan to do some basic school work with children for part of the day, if they are missing school.
- Understand and reassure yourself and family members that the disruption is only temporary.
- Talk to others who are having the same experience.
- Don't try to go home before local authorities tell you it is safe to do so.

### **After the flood**

Recovery from the trauma of a flood can take weeks or even months.

- It's important to allow yourself, family and others to talk about the flood and their feelings for as long as is needed.
- Remember to take regular breaks during clean-up work; talk with your family, go out for a meal or entertainment or visit friends.

### **Help is available**

If you, family, friends or neighbours are having a difficult time, there are resources and trained professionals you can call on for help:

- Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line  
**1-866-367-3276 (1-866-FOR-FARM) toll free**
- Klinik Community Health Centre 24-hour Crisis Line  
**786-8686 in Winnipeg; or 1-888-322-3019 toll free**
- Health Links – Info Santé can help you find resources through your local regional health authority or community mental health services office  
**788-8200 in Winnipeg; or 1-888-315-9257 toll free**

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