

Preparing your family for the possibility of a disaster

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Australia is a country that is affected by many different types of natural disaster, including floods, bushfires and cyclones. Preparing yourself and your family ahead of time can really make a big difference if there is a disaster. This tipsheet outlines ways you can be prepared for a disaster.

You can start to prepare yourself and your family for a possible disaster by using both practical and psychosocial strategies. Practical and psychosocial strategies work best when used together. Being prepared helps you to think about ways to get ready, which can increase your confidence and ability in dealing with a disaster, should it happen.

The four main ways to deal with disasters are through:

- Prevention
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

Preparedness strategies are advance planning of your response if a disaster happens – where you will go, what you will do, how you will keep contact with family and friends.

Practical preparedness strategies include:

- Gathering facts and information about the threat
- Accessing critical information about warnings and actions to take
- Thinking about how and when would you evacuate and where would you go
- Thinking about how to look after yourself, your family and others
- Knowing where help will be available.

• The High Five Model of Psychosocial Preparedness is a strategy that can help you to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

1. Know the risks – knowing about the risks and what you can do helps deal more effectively with a disaster should it occur.
2. Connect with others – connecting with people can assist in dealing with the threat and also protect people from adverse mental health effects. Connectedness helps adults, children and families to get through tough times, particularly in disasters.
3. Identify your strengths - identifying your strengths raises awareness of your own 'tools' or resources which you and your family can use. These may be coping strategies, thinking strategies, feeling strategies and fear management strategies.
4. Learn about what to do in an emergency - Psychological survival skills and practical actions work best together.
5. Look after your life - this means not letting the disaster experience, or preparations for a further disaster threat, take over your life. The regular ritual and patterns of everyday family life provide strong frameworks to see through.

Preparing now for the possibility of a natural disaster can really help you, your family and your children cope with and recover from the disaster.

For more information visit:

Trauma & Grief Network: Supporting Families
www.tgn.anu.edu.au

