

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services**  
**600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Stress and Coping: Taking care of yourself during times of disaster**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services wants to remind people that flood fighting efforts can affect them physically and emotionally. Reactions will vary by person, but could include moodiness and anger, apathy, feeling down or depressed, even suspicious. People may cry for no apparent reason, feel frustrated or powerless and overwhelmed. Others may be anxious about the future, feel guilty, or reject others' help and isolate themselves from friends and family.

Children may react by becoming “clingy,” being reluctant to go to bed, having nightmares, or acting out in other ways. Adults can reassure children that they are safe.

These responses are normal reactions to an abnormal situation, and can persist for weeks after a disaster-related situation. Rest, routine and relationships can help people manage the stress said Shelly Paul, director of regional intervention services at West Central Human Service Center in Bismarck.

“We need to encourage each other to take time to rest and relax with friends and family. This will give us the energy needed to take care of others,” said Paul.

“Having a routine is comforting to the mind and body, especially for children,” she said. “Maintaining a routine for meals and rest is important. People should trust their competence and ability to do the best they can, and keep things in perspective.”

Paul offered these additional tips. Spend time with others. Talk about your feelings with others. Help others in your community and ask your friends and neighbors how they are doing. Be tolerant of irritability, poor concentration, and other common reactions to stress. Maintaining a friendly attitude. A smile can go a long way to brightening someone's day.

**Help is Available**

She said, people should seek help if they have persistent hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, disorientation, extreme emotional reactions, or neglect themselves. Counseling help is available through private, government, and faith-based organizations. People can find mental health professionals listed in the phone book and on the Internet on sites such as Mental Health Services Locator:

<http://store.samhsa.gov/mhlocator>.

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Locally, **West Central Human Service Center**, located on 1237 W. Divide in Bismarck, has professionals on site and a **crisis mental health line at 328-8899 or toll free at 888-328-2112**.

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