



MOVING THROUGH RECOVERY:

A Guide During the Holidays

If you have been affected by a disaster, holidays can be a time of both hope and increased stress, whether you celebrate them or not. Taking small, positive steps in continuing your recovery will help you feel better and more in control.

We have gathered some information on stress, and tips for taking care of yourself and others during the holidays.



WHAT YOU MAY BE EXPERIENCING:

When disaster recovery continues through important holidays, a variety of reactions are common. Most of these responses are temporary.

Some of these reactions may include:

- Feeling sad that a normally joyful time of the year now feels burdened with reestablishing your life or with memories of lost and meaningful belongings;
- Feeling lonely, especially when holiday sights and sounds remind us of happier times or of those we will be missing from this year's rituals
- Feeling overwhelmed or unable to plan daily activities, including holiday activities
- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on tasks at hand
- Becoming easily frustrated with daily tasks or with family and friends
- Arguing more with those around us
- Feeling tired, numb, or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Increasing alcohol or substance use

Children may also:

- Behave aggressively
- Cling to caregivers
- Regress to the behaviour of younger children, such as thumb-sucking or bedwetting

Coping with and recovering from the effects of disaster can take a long time. Coping is the process of managing difficult circumstances and finding ways to tolerate the effects of stress. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look forward, one small step at a time, and focus on taking care of your needs and those of your friends and family.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

It is important to find ways of coping with stress, during the holidays. The following may help you take care of yourself and others:

- Safety and Basic Needs. Focus first on ensuring you have a safe place to stay and that your physical needs are met.
- Eat nutritiously and stay hydrated. Too much holiday "cheer" can increase your stress.
- Get enough rest. With so much to do around the holidays, it can be difficult to rest or get adequate sleep. Rest provides your body and mind a break, which will increase your ability to cope.
- Avoid isolation by reaching out. If you find yourself in new surroundings, reach out to those around you. Giving and receiving support is important.
- Be patient with yourself and with those close to you. Others may be struggling to cope with the disaster during the holidays and may need your patience and support.
- Honour your traditions. Be flexible and prepared to engage in new activities to celebrate this year.
- Take it slow. Small steps are helpful when tasks seem overwhelming. Only do what you can.
- Seek out assistance and resources. Gather information that will help you and your family meet your needs through the holidays.
- Stay positive and make plans. Remind yourself of how you've successfully gotten through difficult times in the past.



THE FOLLOWING MAY HELP YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN:

- Give extra time, hugs and patience.
- Provide reassurance of your family's safety and recovery plans.
- Involve them in activities to assist others; it can help them cope.
- Communicate how the holidays may look different this year. Ask for their feelings.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP:

If you continue to feel overwhelmed, can't shake feelings of despair or find yourself or a loved one experiencing some of the feelings and reactions listed below for two weeks or more, this may be a sign that you need to reach out for additional support. Seek help through your family doctor, spiritual care or community organization. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

- Feelings of intense sadness, hopelessness and/or guilt
- Short temper or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty eating or sleeping
- Lost interest in things that were enjoyable
- Increased physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomachaches,
- Avoiding family and friends
- Increasing alcohol or substance use



RESOURCES:

SOS Crisis Line (24/7)
780-743-HELP (4357)

Mental Health Help Line (24/7)
1-877-303-2642

Alberta Health Services (AHS)
Walk-in Counselling Services
780-743-7187

RMWB Counselling Services
780-743-7910

Borealis Counselling Services
780-791-1757

YMCA of Northern Alberta
780-790-9622

24 Hour Income Support – Alberta Works
1-866-644-5135

Wood Buffalo Food Bank
780-743-1125

For more information on how the Canadian Red Cross can assist you in recovery, please call **1-888-553-5505** or visit redcross.ca/albertafiresinfo

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Disclaimer

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Wishing you the joys of the season and a happy new year