

For **Adults** Recovering From the Emotional Toll of **THE COVID-19 DISASTER**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a state of disaster in our communities, leaving lives changed and futures uncertain. Even if you have not suffered directly from the coronavirus, no one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it.

For many, a disaster continues as a very real presence even long after it has passed. Feelings of sadness, depression, frustration, anger, and anxiety are common. It is not unusual for these feelings to last for many months.

Learning to recognize the normal reactions and emotions that occur can help you better understand these feelings and become more comfortable and effective in coping with them.

The following information explains the range of feelings and behaviors you can expect and how you, your family, friends, and neighbors can best help yourselves and each other during this time of recovery. Suggestions for coping with your feelings are offered throughout this document.



YOUR HEALTH

As you endure long-term stress, your health can be adversely affected. It is common for people to have headaches, stomach or intestinal problems, colds, infections, and allergies more frequently. In addition, preexisting medical conditions such as heart problems and high blood pressure may be exacerbated by the prolonged stress.

MIXED EMOTIONS

Re-engaging with people after a period of COVID-19-imposed isolation can bring mixed emotions such as relief and joy as well as sadness and fear. These are normal feelings and reactions. Sadness is often due to the reminders of loved ones who died from the coronavirus, or businesses/jobs that were lost. Feelings of fear and anxiety are common upon returning to activities and gatherings that once felt normal.

TALK TO CHILDREN

Take time to talk with children about their experience. Listen to what they have to say and let them freely express their feelings. This is a confusing and frightening time for them. Remember children do not have the same level of coping or understanding as adults.

SEASONAL EVENTS

During the first year following a disaster, many calendar events such as birthdays, holidays, and the change of seasons can arouse emotions such as sadness and distress. It is normal for certain events to remind you of "how things used to be," and of things that were changed or lost. Recovery and healing involves letting yourself grieve the loss of these things.

STAY WELL

Michigan.gov/StayWell

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems increase, persist, or interfere with your regular activities, you should consult a physician or a mental health professional, or access helpful resources at Michigan.gov/StayWell.

Stay Well Counseling available through COVID-19 hotline.

**Dial 1-888-535-6136
(Press "8")**



The Stay Well Crisis Counseling and Training Program is funded by a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant and directed by emergency behavioral health staff within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Brochure content adapted from FEMA, the Center for Mental Health Services, and Victim Services of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

WHY DO I FEEL THE WAY I DO?

It is very common for people to experience a wide range of emotional reactions to a disaster. These reactions are experienced through thoughts, feelings, and actions, and are often very upsetting to you and those around you.

However, it is extremely important to remember that they are **NORMAL REACTIONS TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT**. You have been through an exceptionally stressful situation and these emotional reactions may continue for many months following the disaster.



Stay Well Counseling available through COVID-19 hotline.

**Dial 1-888-535-6136
(Press "8")**

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

YOUR BEHAVIORS

Having problems falling or staying asleep • Isolating yourself or withdrawing from others • Keeping excessively busy and preoccupied to avoid the unpleasant effects of the disaster • At times, becoming overly alert or easily startled • Avoiding activities, places, or even people that remind you of the disaster • Experiencing more conflicts or tension with family members or other people/more anger • Crying easily or becoming tearful for no apparent reason • Experiencing an increase or decrease in your normal appetite • Drinking more alcoholic beverages

YOUR FEELINGS

"Just not yourself," out of balance, or easily upset • Loss of interest in everyday activities • A sense of despair, hopelessness, or emptiness about the future • Anxiety or fear, especially when things remind you of the disaster • Irritability, shortness of temper, or anger and resentment • Depression, sadness, or feeling down much of the time

YOUR THOUGHTS

Trouble concentrating or remembering things • Difficulty with making decisions • Frequent replaying of the events and circumstances of the disaster in your mind • Recurring dreams or nightmares about the disaster • Questioning of your spiritual or religious beliefs

HOW TO COPE AND WHAT WORKS

FOR YOURSELF

Talk to others about how you are feeling; it is important to talk about your experiences; you need to express sadness, grief, anger, and fears over what has happened and what you face • Do not overwork yourself; find time for recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby • Do not let yourself become isolated; seek out and maintain connections with your community, friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers, or people who attend your place of worship; talk about your experiences with them

- Pay close attention to your physical health, as prolonged stress takes its toll on your body; maintain a good diet and make sure you are getting enough sleep; it is also helpful to be physically active or exercise • Upsetting times can cause some people to use alcohol or drugs to cope with the stress; it does not help in the long run and will likely cause other problems

FOR YOUR FAMILY

Families should keep some routines in place such as regular meals, certain enjoyable activities, and other family rituals; this will help you feel as though life has some sense of order and normalcy • Couples should take time to be alone, as a couple, to talk about how you are feeling, and to have fun together

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

There are many concerns, adjustments, and ordeals that follow the experience of a disaster. Generally, within a short time there is the reality of financial setbacks and personal devastation from the loss of loved ones. The endless adjustments that you and your family must make will put additional stress on your relationships and daily living. You may also grow physically and mentally weary from continuing requirements to wear face coverings in public and keep a safe distance from others. All of these factors can hinder your ability to move forward.

In the aftermath of a disaster, it is important to remember that it will take time to heal and recover from the emotional effects of the event. However, with the passing of time, your efforts to cope will begin to reduce the intensity and duration of these reactions and behaviors.



SOURCES OF SUPPORT

STAY WELL COUNSELING VIA THE COVID-19 HOTLINE

If you are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, get help from **Michigan Stay Well Counseling** via the COVID-19 Hotline. Call 1-888-535-6136 and press “8” to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor. Counselors available 24/7 – confidential and free. Foreign language interpreters available.

MICHIGAN PEER WARMLINE

If you are living with serious mental illness or substance use challenges and feel it will help lower your stress if you talk with someone who understands these issues, get help from the **Michigan PEER Warmline**. Call 1-888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753). Available every day from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.

MICHIGAN CRISIS TEXT LINE

If you are experiencing emotional stress and anxiety but are more comfortable texting than talking, get help from the **Michigan Crisis Text Line**. Text the keyword “RESTORE” to 741741. Available 24/7.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are thinking of taking your life, get help from the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**. Call 1-800-273-8255 – available 24/7. You can also text the keyword “TALK” to 741741, or visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING HOTLINE

Access 24/7 video relay service. Call 1-800-273-8255 (TTY 1-800-799-4889).

HEADSPACE WEB SERVICE

If you would like to manage feelings of COVID-19 stress and anxiety through meditation, sleep, and movement exercises, get help from **Headspace Web Service**. Free to all Michiganders (normally a paid service). Visit headspace.com/mi.

Helping a **Child** Recover From the Emotional Toll of **THE COVID-19 DISASTER**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a state of disaster in our communities, leaving lives changed and futures uncertain. Even if your family has not suffered directly from the coronavirus, no one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it.

For many, a disaster continues as a very real presence even long after it has passed. Feelings of sadness, depression, frustration, anger, and anxiety are common. It is not unusual for these feelings to last for many

months. Learning to recognize the normal reactions and emotions that occur can help you better understand these feelings and become more comfortable and effective in coping with them.

The following information explains the range of feelings and behaviors you can expect from your children and how you can best help them during this time of recovery. Suggestions for coping are offered throughout this document.



TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH THE LOSS OF SECURITY AND FEEL MORE SECURE, THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO

Acknowledge and respect your child's fear and losses; allow your child to grieve about the loss of direct contact with friends, classmates, teachers, and loved ones. Encourage your child to talk about how they feel—what they are afraid of. Make time for extra hugs and touch in general. Try to spend extra time together in family activities to begin replacing fears with pleasant memories.

CHILDREN REACT DIFFERENTLY TO TRAUMA AND STRESSFUL EVENTS THAN ADULTS DO

Their responses may be delayed or difficult to detect, especially children who have a history of acting out or who may be suffering with depression, which tends to produce symptoms of withdrawal and silent suffering. It is important to understand that younger children do pick up on the fears and concerns of the adults in their lives.

STAY WELL

Michigan.gov/StayWell

Eliminate stressors whenever possible. This is easy to say and much harder to do. However, parents and caregivers can work together to reduce stress by doing such things as making sure children eat right, get plenty of rest, slow down, have time to talk about issues and concerns, and avoid inappropriate television programming.

Stay Well Counseling available through COVID-19 hotline.

**Dial 1-888-535-6136
(Press "8")**



The Stay Well Crisis Counseling and Training Program is funded by a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant and directed by emergency behavioral health staff within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Brochure content adapted from FEMA, the Center for Mental Health Services, and Victim Services of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

In children ages 5 and younger you may notice the following:

More clingy behavior • Fear of separation from parents or caregivers • Agitation, acting out, or bouts of crying • Behavioral regression such as bedwetting or baby talk • Difficulty with sleeping or nightmares • Appetite changes • Avoidance of any reminders of the trauma

In children ages 6–11 you may notice these feelings, behaviors, and experiences:

Repetitious play in which the child goes over and over the trauma events • Difficulty with sleeping or nightmares • Unusual outbursts of anger • Fighting or avoidance of going to school • Isolation from friends and family • Fear and preoccupation with issues of safety and danger as shown by behaviors such as locking doors • Regression to behaviors of previous developmental stages • Expressions of guilt and magical thinking that the trauma was their fault • Stomach aches, headaches, or other physical problems • Difficulty with focusing at school, doing homework, or reading • Persistent feelings of distress when thinking about or reminded of the traumatic event

HOW TO COPE AND WHAT WORKS

There are no simple exercises to easily address all behaviors. There are some things you can do, though, that may help.

Ease your child back into a regular routine, and help to minimize their anxiety:

Stick to a predictable schedule and routine as much as possible; change is disruptive and may create anxiety in children; parents can assist kids' general adaptation by minimizing irregularities, especially surrounding separation

- When leaving the child, tell them where you are going and what you will be doing; tell the child what they will be doing while you are gone; for example: "Mrs. Franklin will play blocks with you and make your lunch; I'll be home after lunch" • Be patient and make separation as safe and pleasant as possible; this may require taking extra time in the morning so clinging behavior does not delay and stress mom or dad
- Reassure the child by explaining that you are leaving because you must and not because you do not love them or dislike being with them; separate leaving from loving • Reassure your child by saying that you will see them later; separation fears may exist in part because the child is uncertain of a reunion • Explain that missing mom or dad is normal and hard but does not mean the child cannot have friends or fun
- Encourage childhood play and praise the child for being big enough to play without you
- Do not linger as this may reinforce the separation displays; after all, from the child's perspective, clinging pays off because mom and dad stay longer; so, leave your child when you must, and do it swiftly but lovingly

Understand—Be Compassionate

Throughout all of this, it's important to remember that your child is reacting to the loss of something familiar, whether it is the presence of family members, contact with friends, or a specific routine. In many cases, they may be responding to the loss of a sense of safety and security.

Your child is, in a sense, mourning a former way of life, and their behavior is reflective of the mourning process. In fact, it can take a long time for a child to recover from losses or changes that affect their sense of security.

You can help children cope by understanding what causes their anxieties and fears. Reassure them with firmness and love. Your children will realize that life can again have a sense of being normal.

Stop and Focus All of Your Attention on Your Child for a Little While

Perhaps taking a few additional moments to connect with the child will be all they require to feel more secure.

Hug and touch your child • Reassure the child frequently that you are safe and together • Talk with your child about their feelings about the disaster • Share **your** feelings • Give information the child can understand • Spend extra time with your child at bedtime



SOURCES OF SUPPORT

STAY WELL COUNSELING VIA THE COVID-19 HOTLINE

If you are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, get help from **Michigan Stay Well Counseling** via the COVID-19 Hotline. Call 1-888-535-6136 and press “8” to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor. Counselors available 24/7 – confidential and free. Foreign language interpreters available.

MICHIGAN PEER WARMLINE

If you are living with serious mental illness or substance use challenges and feel it will help lower your stress if you talk with someone who understands these issues, get help from the **Michigan PEER Warmline**. Call 1-888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753). Available every day from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.

MICHIGAN CRISIS TEXT LINE

If you are experiencing emotional stress and anxiety but are more comfortable texting than talking, get help from the **Michigan Crisis Text Line**. Text the keyword “RESTORE” to 741741. Available 24/7.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are thinking of taking your life, get help from the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**. Call 1-800-273-8255 – available 24/7. You can also text the keyword “TALK” to 741741, or visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING HOTLINE

Access 24/7 video relay service. Call 1-800-273-8255 (TTY 1-800-799-4889).

HEADSPACE WEB SERVICE

If you would like to manage feelings of COVID-19 stress and anxiety through meditation, sleep, and movement exercises, get help from **Headspace Web Service**. Free to all Michiganders (normally a paid service). Visit headspace.com/mi.

For Older Adults Recovering From the Emotional Toll of THE COVID-19 DISASTER

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a state of disaster in our communities, leaving lives changed and futures uncertain. Even if you have not suffered directly from the coronavirus, no one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it.

For many a disaster continues as a very real presence even long after it has passed. Feelings of sadness, depression, frustration, anger, and anxiety are common. It is not unusual for these feelings to last for many months. Learning to recognize the normal reactions and emotions that occur can help you better understand these

feelings and become more comfortable and effective in coping with them.

As an older adult, you probably have many of these reactions and feelings; however, some may be different or intensified. It is important to ask for support when you need it.

The following information explains the range of feelings and behaviors you can expect and how you, your friends, and neighbors can best help yourselves and each other during this time of recovery. Suggestions for coping with your feelings are offered throughout this document.



WHY DO I FEEL THE WAY I DO?

It is very common for people to experience a wide range of emotional reactions to a disaster. These reactions are experienced through thoughts, feelings, and actions, and are often very upsetting to you and those around you.

However, it is extremely important to remember that they are **NORMAL REACTIONS TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT**. You have been through an exceptionally stressful situation and these emotional reactions may continue for many months following the disaster.

COMMON FEELINGS

Current losses can trigger memories or feelings associated with prior losses. After a disaster you may experience the following:

Fear of contracting COVID-19 illness • Fear of dependency or lack of self-sufficiency • Worry about limited financial resources • Fear of institutionalization • Fear of a decline in health and mobility

COMMON REACTIONS

Withdrawing and/or isolating yourself from family and friends
• Concealing the full extent of the disaster's impact • No longer caring about participating in activities that were once enjoyable
• No motivation to rebuild social connections or start over—apathy

STAY WELL

Michigan.gov/StayWell

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems increase, persist, or interfere with your regular activities, consult a physician or a mental health professional, or call the telephone number listed below.

Stay Well Counseling available through COVID-19 hotline.

Dial 1-888-535-6136
(Press "8")



The Stay Well Crisis Counseling and Training Program is funded by a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant and directed by emergency behavioral health staff within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Brochure content adapted from FEMA, the Center for Mental Health Services, and Victim Services of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

YOUR BEHAVIORS

Having problems falling or staying asleep

- Isolating yourself or withdrawing from others
- Keeping excessively busy and preoccupied to avoid the unpleasant effects of the disaster
- At times, becoming overly alert or easily startled
- Avoiding activities, places, or even people that remind you of the disaster
- Experiencing more conflicts or tension with family members or other people/more anger
- Crying easily or becoming tearful for no apparent reason
- Experiencing an increase or decrease in your normal appetite
- Drinking more alcoholic beverages

YOUR THOUGHTS

Trouble concentrating or remembering things

- Difficulty with making decisions
- Frequent replaying of the events and circumstances of the disaster in your mind
- Recurring dreams or nightmares about the disaster
- Questioning of your spiritual or religious beliefs

YOUR FEELINGS

“Just not yourself,” out of balance, or easily upset

- Loss of interest in everyday activities
- A sense of despair, hopelessness, or emptiness about the future
- Anxiety or fear, especially when things remind you of the disaster
- Irritability, shortness of temper, or anger and resentment
- Depression, sadness, or feeling down much of the time

YOUR HEALTH

As you endure long-term stress, your health can be adversely affected. It is common for people to have headaches, stomach or intestinal problems, colds, infections, and allergies more frequently. In addition, preexisting medical conditions such as heart problems and high blood pressure may be exacerbated by the prolonged stress.



Stay Well Counseling available through COVID-19 hotline.

**Dial 1-888-535-6136
(Press “8”)**

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

There are many concerns, adjustments, and ordeals that follow the experience of a disaster. Generally, within a short time there is the reality of financial setbacks and personal devastation from the loss of loved ones. The endless adjustments that you and your family must make will put additional stress on your relationships and daily living. You may also grow physically and mentally weary from continuing requirements to wear face coverings in public and to keep a safe distance from others. All of these factors can hinder your ability to move forward.

In the aftermath of a disaster, it is important to remember that it will take time to heal and recover from the emotional effects of the event. However, with the passing of time, your efforts to cope will begin to reduce the intensity and duration of these reactions and behaviors.

HOW TO COPE AND WHAT WORKS

Talk to others about how you are feeling; it is important to talk about your experiences. You need to express sadness, grief, anger, and fears over what has happened and what you face

- Don't overwork yourself; find time for recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby
- Do not let yourself become isolated; seek out and maintain connections with your community, friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers, or people who attend your place of worship; talk about

your experiences with them

- Pay close attention to your physical health, as prolonged stress takes its toll on your body; maintain a good diet and make sure you are getting enough sleep; it is also helpful to be physically active or exercise
- Upsetting times can cause some people to use alcohol or drugs to cope with the stress; it does not help in the long run and will likely cause other problems



SOURCES OF SUPPORT

STAY WELL COUNSELING VIA THE COVID-19 HOTLINE

If you are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, get help from **Michigan Stay Well Counseling** via the COVID-19 Hotline. Call 1-888-535-6136 and press “8” to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor. Counselors available 24/7 – confidential and free. Foreign language interpreters available.

MICHIGAN PEER WARMLINE

If you are living with serious mental illness or substance use challenges and feel it will help lower your stress if you talk with someone who understands these issues, get help from the **Michigan PEER Warmline**. Call 1-888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753). Available every day from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.

MICHIGAN CRISIS TEXT LINE

If you are experiencing emotional stress and anxiety but are more comfortable texting than talking, get help from the **Michigan Crisis Text Line**. Text the keyword “RESTORE” to 741741. Available 24/7.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are thinking of taking your life, get help from the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**. Call 1-800-273-8255 – available 24/7. You can also text the keyword “TALK” to 741741, or visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING HOTLINE

Access 24/7 video relay service. Call 1-800-273-8255 (TTY 1-800-799-4889).

HEADSPACE WEB SERVICE

If you would like to manage feelings of COVID-19 stress and anxiety through meditation, sleep, and movement exercises, get help from **Headspace Web Service**. Free to all Michiganders (normally a paid service). Visit headspace.com/mi.



SOURCES OF **SUPPORT**

STAY WELL COUNSELING VIA THE COVID-19 HOTLINE

If you are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, get help from **Michigan Stay Well Counseling** via the COVID-19 Hotline. Call 1-888-535-6136 and press “8” to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor. Counselors available 24/7 – confidential and free. Foreign language interpreters available.

MICHIGAN PEER WARMLINE

If you are living with serious mental illness or substance use challenges and feel it will help lower your stress if you talk with someone who understands these issues, get help from the **Michigan PEER Warmline**. Call 1-888-PEER-753 (888-733-7753). Available every day from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.

MICHIGAN CRISIS TEXT LINE

If you are experiencing emotional stress and anxiety but are more comfortable texting than talking, get help from the **Michigan Crisis Text Line**. Text the keyword “RESTORE” to 741741. Available 24/7.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are thinking of taking your life, get help from the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**. Call 1-800-273-8255 – available 24/7. You can also text the keyword “TALK” to 741741, or visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING HOTLINE

Access 24/7 video relay service. Call 1-800-273-8255 (TTY 1-800-799-4889).

HEADSPACE WEB SERVICE

If you would like to manage feelings of COVID-19 stress and anxiety through meditation, sleep, and movement exercises, get help from **Headspace Web Service**. Free to all Michiganders (normally a paid service). Visit headspace.com/mi.

Helping Children Cope with Stress

STRESS can affect anyone—even a child—who feels overwhelmed. Stress comes from the demands placed on a person and their ability (or perceived ability) to meet them. Childhood stress comes from outside sources (family, friends, school, illness, death of loved ones, divorce, and disasters) and from within (pressures children place on themselves).

What are the signs my child is feeling stress?

- Mood swings
- Acting out
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Bedwetting
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Nightmares
- Separation anxiety
- Overreactions to problems
- Drastic changes in academic performance
- Refusal to participate in activities
- Trouble concentrating
- Problems completing schoolwork
- Withdrawal
- Regression (common in younger children; may include thumb sucking, hair twirling)
- Lying, bullying, and defiance of authority (common in older children)

You may not be able to keep your child from feeling frustrated, sad, or angry, but you can help them cope with these emotions.

Seek help when problems appear to be serious and/or interfere with daily living. Talk to your child's doctor or a counselor.

For free emotional support as you help your child cope with stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic:
call the Michigan COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-535-6136 and press "8" to speak to a Stay Well counselor.

The Stay Well Crisis Counseling and Training Program is funded by a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant and directed by emergency behavioral health staff within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Content adapted from Louisiana Spirit CCP.

- Make time for your child each day.
- Give your child lots of hugs and kisses.
- Notice your child's feelings out loud.
- Listen to your child—allow them to talk about things that may be causing stress.
- Help your child by discussing potentially stressful situations and helping them prepare for them.
- Just be there. Respect your child and tell them you'll be there when they are ready to talk.
- Be patient. Resist the urge to fix every problem. Help your child grow into a good problem solver.
- Avoid talking about your troubles around your child.
- Ensure that your child gets proper rest.
- Ensure that your child gets proper nutrition—balanced meals and regular eating times.
- Ensure that your child gets enough exercise.
- Avoid overscheduling. Help your child manage their time and responsibilities.
- Ensure that your child has play time and quiet time.
- Monitor exposure to news about trauma.