

8 Tips for Mental Health Promotion after Disaster (vol.1.1)

~based on lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake~

- No.1** Terrifying experiences, loss of beloved family members and friends, major changes in life style due to disaster cause survivors considerable stress. It is normal and natural that our mind and body majorly respond to such stresses.
- No. 2** People tend to have depressed feelings, decreased motivation and interest, self-blaming thoughts, low self-esteem in responses to the disaster-related stresses. Such responses can be sustained long period after the disaster. Don't put pressure on yourself. Seek someone you can consult regarding the situation.
- No.3** People tend to recall disaster-related memories with heartache, as if they intrude oneself, experience physical response such as heartbeat and sweat, avoid things which remind oneself the memories. It is good to know that you or people surrounding you can experience these response. Don't endure the pain alone. Try to find someone you feel safe to share your feelings.
- No.4** People tend to have difficulty sleeping after a disaster, feelings/sensations, and physical diseases. Take enough rest. Try to have a safe and quiet circumstance to sleep better. Consult a doctor if you experience prolonged feelings of physical and mental difficulty.
- No.5** People tend to drink more alcohol after a disaster. Be careful not to consume alcohol too much or too often, or drink to soothe heartache or ease sleeping difficulties; alcohol tends to make health condition and sleep quality worse.
- No.6** Children, pregnant women, elderlies, foreigners, people with impairments of the body or mind, including sight and hearing, are especially vulnerable to disaster-related stresses. Help them feel safe and secure. Childrens' behavioral changes, such as regression to an earlier stage of childhood, often reflect a stress response. Instead of scolding, keep a close watch on their mind.
- No.7** People, who work for disaster response and reconstruction of the affected community, tend to be significantly exposed to disaster-related stresses. If you work in such a position, take care of yourself, and try to leave your workplace occasionally to help clear your mind. Surrounding people should also understand the situation of the workers, better appreciate their efforts, and avoid overwhelming them with too many tasks, responsibilities, or blames.
- No. 8** Even if you are affected by the disaster-related stresses, you will eventually recovered. Again, don't endure the pain alone. Seek someone you can consult regarding the situation.