

Emotional wellbeing

Following a natural disaster



Our emotional reactions following stressful events

We all experience events differently. Before, during and following a stressful and challenging experience, it is natural for people to experience a range of responses including stress responses.

These responses are not necessarily a sign of a lasting mental health concern. Research following natural disasters has consistently demonstrated that most people adjust and recover without additional or professional intervention and maintain this over time.

Mental health continuum



Mental health is a sliding scale

Our mental health is not static. Everyone's mental health moves up and down along a sliding scale from positive to poor mental health, or even mental ill-health, and is influenced by a range of things—including the effects of events and circumstances around us, such as natural disasters.

Every person's response to a mental health challenge is different, and it's important for responses to match the level of need and preferences of the person seeking help.

While most people get back to their usual functioning over time, some people will experience a decline in their mental health and wellbeing, or experience mental health problems in the months or even years after the initial event.

Everyone is different, with different needs and situations. What will be useful will also vary from person to person. In the table over the page, there are links to resources and services that can assist with maintaining wellbeing during challenging times, as well as when we are experiencing more pronounced responses and distress.

People may find reaching out to existing connections, building stronger connections, and applying other self-care strategies helps to adjust and recover.

This isn't always the case and sometimes additional support may be needed.

Access all the resources in this guide by using this QR code.



Resources

How do you know it's time to seek additional help?

Most people recover from a disaster with the support of family and friends and don't need professional help. However, many people who could benefit from professional assistance do not seek help in a timely way, or at all.

Getting to know the common responses to disaster and trauma will help you know when to seek professional support. The Beyond Blue resource [natural disasters and your mental health](#) identifies the common responses people experience following a traumatic event, and the responses that are of greater concern.

Sometimes friends, family and work colleagues can see changes that a person themselves cannot see. Understanding how to support or care for others can make a big difference. If you are concerned about someone it's important to encourage them to seek help.

It's useful to listen to the trusted advice of friends and family who may be concerned about you, and talk to a professional.

Start with your GP

A common first step for professional support about mental health concerns is approaching a general practitioner (GP). GPs can either help you themselves or they can refer you to other healthcare professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or occupational therapists.

When required, GPs can work with you to develop a [mental health treatment plan](#) that makes appointments with eligible allied health professionals more affordable.

| Immediate and first few weeks | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| General community | Directly impacted by disaster |
| Keep well | Mild distress |

Giving to others and volunteering after a disaster is a good way to support your community. There are numerous organisations you can support, such as:

- [Australian Red Cross](#)
- [GIVIT](#)
- [Emergency Volunteering Qld](#)

How to help [family and friends](#) recover from flood.

Look after your wellbeing using tips from [Dear mind](#).

[Well Mob](#) provides social, emotional and cultural wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[Life in Mind](#) offers practical and emotional support for flood affected communities.

There are resources to help you [support someone who has experienced a traumatic event](#).

[Birdie's Tree](#) is a story resource that can help young children make sense of what's happening and is also available in [other languages](#).

Headspace has resources for [supporting a young person](#) following a natural disaster.

The way adults interpret and respond to disaster news can impact [children](#) and [teenagers](#).

[Medicare Mental Health](#) provides information and resources to check and support your mental health and wellbeing.

Beyond Blue has information about [common and concerning reactions to natural disaster](#).

Lifeline also has a toolkit about [understanding natural disasters](#).

Here are common responses to trauma and the impact of crisis on:

- [families](#)
- [babies](#)
- [children](#)
- [teenagers](#).

Kids Helpline also has advice for [supporting children to cope in natural disasters](#).

Feeling stressed is a natural response to a natural disaster. Here's some useful advice about [managing stress after a disaster](#).

There's also advice for parents and carers on [supporting children after a disaster or community trauma](#).

[Teens \(13-17 years\)](#) and [young people](#) may also need support to cope after a natural disaster.

[Birdie's Tree](#) is a great resource to help young children make sense of a disaster through [story-telling](#).

[Life in Mind](#) offers practical and emotional support for flood affected communities, including for First Nations Queenslanders.

It's challenging dealing with natural disaster, but there are things you can do to look after your own and other's wellbeing using [Dear mind](#) resources.

The Queensland Government's [disaster and emergency recovery](#) website has practical information to support community recovery.

| Immediate and first few weeks | | After 4-6 weeks |
|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Directly impacted by disaster | | |
| Moderate distress | High distress | Ongoing distress |

Read Beyond Blue's [common and concerning reactions to natural disaster](#) resource.

Also check out Lifeline's toolkit [understanding natural disasters](#).

Common responses to trauma and the impact of crisis on:

- [families](#)
- [babies](#)
- [children](#)
- [teenagers](#).

Here's some important information about [managing stress after a disaster](#).

Advice for parents on [how to support children impacted by disaster or community trauma](#).

Tips for [teens \(13-17 years\)](#) and [young people](#) on coping with a natural disaster.

Also read Red Cross resources on [recovering from a disaster](#).

[NewAccess](#) is a free coaching program, available in many parts of Queensland for people experiencing ongoing stress.

Medicare Mental Health provides links to:

- [disaster support](#)
- [digital mental health](#) resources
- [This Way Up](#) online programs.

MindSpot offers an [Indigenous Wellbeing Course](#) and a [digital mental health clinic](#).

Young people aged from 5–25 can talk to [Kids Helpline](#) at any time.

If experiencing distress, chat to:

- [Lifeline](#) or call 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) (ages 5-25)—call 1800 55 1800

They provide trusted and confidential support services.

Contact [Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support](#) or call 1800 177 833 if you are experiencing issues with alcohol and other drug use.

Access [Beyond Blue support service](#) via phone (1300 22 4636), chat, email or online forums.

Access the [Suicide Call Back Service for 24/7 telephone and online counselling](#).

Talk to your [general practitioner](#) (GP) or [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care provider](#).

Contact 1300 MH CALL on 1300 64 22 55. This a confidential [mental health telephone triage service](#) for Queenslanders that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services.

There are a range of [Support groups](#) that can also be a helpful resource.

It is important to recognise that persistent anxiety, stress or distress that is impacting your daily functioning may need more intensive and specialised support.

For initial advice, confidentially chat to:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) (ages 5-25) on 1800 55 1800.

It is a good idea to talk to your [general practitioner](#) (GP) or [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care provider](#).

Your GP can prepare a [mental health treatment plan](#) and refer you to a psychologist, other allied health provider, peer worker or psychiatrist, depending on your individual needs.

Consider talking to 1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55). It is a confidential [mental health telephone triage service](#) for Queenslanders that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services.



In an emergency or crisis

If you think it is an emergency or someone's life is in danger call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance, or go straight to the closest emergency department.

Support services

Other options

Many other services offer counselling and other support to assist with concerns about thoughts, feelings and coping. They can be accessed either online, by telephone or face-to-face. They may be in community health centres, family support or neighbourhood centres.

General community

- [Lifeline](#) offers 24/7 counselling. Phone 13 11 14, text 0477 131 114 or access [web chat](#).
- [1300 MH CALL](#) is a confidential mental health telephone triage service for Queensland's public mental health services. Phone 1300 64 22 55.
- Beyond Blue provides [information online](#) and also a support service 24/7 via 1300 224 636 as well as online [chat, email and forums](#).

Children, young people and families

- [Kids Helpline website](#) has information for different age groups, web chat, email, and peer support as well as telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5–25 years. Phone 1800 55 1800 anytime, for any reason.
- [Parentline](#) provides age-specific online information as well as support, counselling, and education for parents. Phone 1300 301 300.
- [PANDA](#) Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia supports women, men and families affected by anxiety and depression during pregnancy and in the first year of parenthood. Phone 1300 726 306 Monday to Friday 9:00am to 7:30pm (AEST).
- A community trauma toolkit hosted by [Emerging Minds](#) contains online resources to help and support adults and children before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.
- [Headspace](#) and [e-headspace](#) provides centre-based, online and telephone-based support services.
- Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling provides [information, counselling and group programs](#) for Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. Phone 1800 011 046.
- The [Women's Wellbeing Line](#) provides free mental health support for women, girls and gender diverse folk in Queensland. Phone 1800 496 636 Monday to Friday 8-8pm and Saturday 9-5pm.

Alcohol and other drugs support

- Adis [24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support](#) provides free phone support, information and referral for people with alcohol and other drug concerns. Phone 1800 177 833.

- [Peer Onect](#) provides free peer support and information for people who use substances across Queensland. Phone 1800 177 833.

Gambling support

- Gambler's Help offers 24/7 support. Phone 1800 858 858 or access [online support](#).

Family and domestic violence

- [1800RESPECT](#) 24-hour domestic violence helpline. Phone 1800 737 732.
- [DVConnect Womensline](#) telephone service offers 24/7 help to women experiencing domestic or family violence. Phone 1800 811 811.

Support for men

- MensLine offers [telephone and online support](#), information and referrals to help men with relationship and other problems. Call 1300 789 978.

LGBTIQIA+

- [QLife](#) is an LGBTIQIA+ support line, available from 3pm to midnight every day. Phone 1800 184 527 or access [webchat](#).

First Nations

- [13YARN](#) provides free and confidential 24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Phone 13 92 76.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

- [Multicultural Connect Line](#) is a helpline with an on-demand interpreter service. It offers free information, advice and referral to Queenslanders experiencing hardship, stress or worry. Phone 1300 079 020. Operates Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm, closed weekends and public holidays.
- [QPASTT](#) provides free, voluntary, confidential support for people from refugee backgrounds and for people seeking asylum who have experienced torture and/or trauma.

Carers

- [Arafmi](#) provides a range of supports for family, friends and carers of people with mental illness. Phone 1300 554 660 any time, any day.
- [Carers Queensland](#) has a range of specialised carer and disability support services. Phone 1300 747 636 or email info@carersqld.com.au.

Small business

- [Ahead for Business](#) assists small business owners to take action on their mental health and wellbeing and has resources on the [effects of floods on small business](#).
- [NewAccess for Small Business Owners](#) is a guided self-help mental health coaching program for small business owners and sole traders.