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Fact Sheet

Help is Available for Stress Following Hurricanes

Having trouble sleeping, sharing your thoughts or concentrating on the task at hand? Are you feeling angry, sad or terribly frustrated or hopeless? These are just some of the signs of emotional stress that appear following life-altering disasters, whether natural or man-made.

For many survivors, the emotional pain that Hurricane Matthew, Hurricane Florence, and then Hurricane Michael caused can equal the financial devastation those three storms brought. How survivors react to their losses vary with the individual. Everyone who sees or experiences a disaster is affected by it in some way, and their reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event.

The Disaster Distress Helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-985-5990 or online at disasterdistress.samhsa.gov. It offers immediate and confidential crisis counseling. Other sources of help can be found on the state government site ncdhhs.gov/assistance/hurricane-florence; click on "Behavioral Health" under the heading *Hurricane Florence*.

Survivors should also heed the following signs of stress:

- Limited attention span
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Loss of appetite
- Disorientation or confusion
- Depression, sadness
- Mood swings and bouts of crying
- Difficulty maintaining balance in your life
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers or being alone
- Reluctance to leave home
- Increased alcohol or drug use.

Signs of stress can appear weeks or even months after a traumatic event. If they appear, survivors are encouraged to seek counseling for themselves or family members. Maintaining a normal

family and daily routine, spending time with your support groups of family and friends, and taking care of yourself also are ways to ease stress.

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FEMA's mission: Helping people before, during and after disasters.