

When to Seek Outside Help for Stress

Source: Iowa State University

Sometimes stress is so overwhelming that personal coping methods are not enough. Floods can destroy crops, homes, businesses or anything that humans can build. Even though people do not control the weather, they can get down on themselves and begin to feel desperate and worthless.

A devastating feeling of helplessness is a normal reaction to a natural disaster. Personal coping methods help most people bolster their self-esteem. When those methods fail, several crisis signs may signal a need for outside help.

Professionals can provide extra support when it's needed. If any of the following signs seem familiar, seek help.

- Physical abuse. One spouse hits, shoves or kicks the other spouse. A parent strikes a child so harshly that marks or bruises develop.
- Verbal abuse. A parent can say nothing good about a child or continually reprimands or criticizes the child. A spouse's words are critical or demeaning.
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Thoughts or talk of marital separation.
- Panic attacks. Overcome with fears and having a high pulse rate and having difficulty breathing.

The following are normal reactions to severe stress. However, if one or more of the signs continue for more than a week, seek outside help.

- Depression. Signs include: sleep-pattern changes such as difficulty falling asleep, frequently waking in the night or too early in the morning, continual sleeping; personal care changes such as skipping baths and shampoos; physical or mental changes such as overeating or undereating; feeling numb or continually tired; losing ability to concentrate; or crying constantly.
- Parenting problems. Inability to cope and give needed attention to children.
- Behavioral problems. Children act up frequently, get into trouble with authorities.
- Isolation. Not having anyone to talk with.
- Inability to face reality. Not wanting to admit how serious the problems really are or to begin work on them.

Help is available. Many people have been affected by the flood. No one has to face these problems alone.

NDSU
Extension Service
North Dakota State University

County Commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. North Dakota State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, Vietnam Era Veterans status, sexual orientation, marital status, or public assistance status. Direct inquiries to the Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Global Outreach, 205 Old Main, (701) 231-7708. This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701 231-7881.