



Australian Government

Tsunami Fact Sheet

Supporting people affected
by disaster



Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to help a person affected by disaster. It is normal to struggle with what to say or do in these cases.

Below are some tips on how to best help a person recovering from traumatic events like the Tsunami.

- Offer support and listen. Allow people to talk about it, if they wish to. Remember that people will need to take their own time and talk when they are ready. This may not be for some time.
- Help with practical tasks and chores. This gives people more energy and time for the recovery process.
- Stressed people may need to concentrate on themselves at first; they may feel supported if you let them know you are concerned.
- Give people time, space and patience. Don't take it personally if at times they are irritable or want to be alone. These reactions are natural.
- Don't try to talk people out of their reactions, minimise the event or try to get them to look on the bright side. Saying things like 'you're lucky it wasn't worse', or 'pull yourself together' isn't helpful.

When to get extra help

There are many distressing feelings, which may occur initially, but usually pass. If they are disruptive or continuing at a high level and over time, then people may need specialist help in some cases.

Below are some indicators about when extra help may be required:

- physical or other symptoms are causing concern
- there is emotional numbness, depression or continuing anxiety
- continuing disturbed sleep and nightmares
- inability to handle the intense feelings or physical sensations
- becoming accident prone
- increasing use of drugs and alcohol
- recovery has stalled or does not seem to be proceeding.

Then it might be a good time to seek further support from someone who can help.

Talk to your GP or call the Tsunami Assistance Hotline on **1800 057 111** (FreeCALL™).