

Coping with Anniversaries: You, your family and your community



Recovering from disasters can be a slow and stressful process. Milestones, like anniversaries, can be challenging and carry expectation that recovery should be over. Everyone recovers differently; there is no one thing or time that marks the end.

It is normal to still feel sad or stressed around the anniversary of a disaster event. It takes time, but these feelings can fade if you have the right support and look after your wellbeing.

Some tips from Disaster Recovery Mentor Dr Rob Gordon on looking after yourself and those close to you:

- Rest and listen to what your body, mind and emotions tell you. You will eventually get energy back - you just have a big overdraft.
- Give yourself recreation activities you enjoy which add energy and make things feel worthwhile.
- Put energy into rebuilding relationships, family and important friendships. Make time to be together by changing routines and patterns. Check in on children.
- Have health checks and review diet and exercise.
- Take time for things you enjoy.

Seeking further support

Sometimes, personal recovery needs to be supported by specialist knowledge to ensure that stress doesn't linger unnecessarily or lead to other health problems. Stress can resolve with advice from professionals, such as GPs, counsellors or psychologists. Consider seeking further support if:

- Physical or other symptoms are causing concern
- There is no one to talk to or relationships are being affected by the stress
- You feel emotionally numb, depressed or more anxious than normal
- You continue to have disturbed sleep and nightmares
- You are unable to handle the intense feelings or physical sensations
- You are becoming accident prone or increasing the use of drugs and alcohol
- Recovery has stalled or does not seem to be proceeding.

Anniversaries of disaster events can be upsetting, particularly if media coverage is intense. There may be formal events to mark the anniversary which you are invited to attend. There may also be informal events arranged by others affected. You may find these times difficult, so it is helpful to have a plan to reduce the impact. Limit your exposure to media coverage, plan your day with relaxing activities and make sure you have people available to support you, should you need it.

Help is available online: <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis>

Help is available by phone: **Lifeline 13 11 14**