

Cards for **Calamity**

The 8 essential messages to
help in the weeks after disaster

*Use these messages to help guide your
leadership and communications.*

These **Blue** cards, which together spell **BREATHE**, are our seven top tips to steer you through the first days and weeks after a disaster.

Bring people together

Resist risky behavior

Expect triggers

Anticipate odd reactions

Tackle adrenaline overload

Handle information

Energize others

Bring People Together

Research and experience tells us that people do better after a disaster when they have support of friends and family and are socially connected.

There are plenty of ways to do this amongst the shock, displacement and discomfort after disaster.

In New Orleans, people shared traditional recipes that worked well for cooking with limited facilities, limited access to ingredients and limited fuss.

In Queensland, Australia, a local business with emergency power, set up a cellphone charging area and fired up a grill for cooking and conversation.

Resist Risky Behavior

A huge range of emotions flow after disaster, from feeling everything hard and fast, to feeling nothing — a kind of numbness.

Some feel exhilarated. Some feel invincible. Some feel overwhelmed and turn to unhealthy coping strategies such as heavy drinking or risky sexual behavior.

If this is you, you might not be able to see it for yourself, so pay attention to comments about your behavior from people who care about you. Do your best to avoid behaviors that won't help you in the long run or may hurt you or those around you.

Expect Triggers

After a traumatic event, our bodies have learned that certain sounds, smells, sights and sensations mean danger.

For example, post-earthquake, a truck rumbling past makes you jump. Post-flood, clouds heavy with rain make you anxious. Post-fire, the smell of smoke makes your muscles clench.

Tip: *These responses are not conscious, considered, or chosen but are very normal in the wake of disaster, and usually pass over time.**

*If these responses feel overwhelming, you're worried they're going on too long or are getting in the way of day to day life, then it really helps to get some guidance from the experts. Seek the advice of your health practitioner.

Anticipate Odd Reactions

If you find your body, mind and emotions doing all sorts of odd things after disaster, accept that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Disasters hit us hard at our core. Chances are your body and mind are doing their best to process what has happened and that you will come right with time.*

Tip: *If you chat to others about it, you'll probably find they too have been feeling or behaving out of sorts.*

*Don't hesitate to reach out for help at any time or if things don't seem to be improving.

Tackle Adrenaline Overload

After the threat is gone, we feel exhausted. This is because adrenaline requires a great deal of our bodies. All our resources have been redirected and deployed. There is no holding back conserving energy in times of high stress. Your body puts everything on the line, so you can survive another day.

Tip: *It is from this place of depletion that we often start the long trek and many tasks that follow disaster. Rest, whenever you can get it, is important to allow your body to replenish again.*

Handle Information

You may find that information flies at you left, right and center. And yet the crucial information you need is elusive, unreliable or contradictory.

Tip: *Monitor websites of local government and social service organizations. Take notes or snap photos with your phone to help you keep track. Join up with others to share information and include those you think might miss out. Go old school if you need to — use noticeboards, nail a sign to a tree...*

Energize Others

When it's real tough, there'll be plenty of laugh or cry moments.

Find ways to energize each other through desperate times.

For example, with earthquakes come broken sewers. Trudging outside with your bucket is a laugh or cry moment. In Christchurch, people got creative to make it all feel a little less desperate. Holes were dug in the yard, temporary walls went up, decorations were added and the end result was a city-wide competition for the best temporary toilet, called "show us your loo."

Cards for Calamity

*[Click here](#) to order the full
deck of 70 Cards for Calamity:*

- Understand the disaster recovery journey to guide your leadership and communications
- Support your disaster-impacted staff and communities
- Link to a digital education resource to understand the road ahead

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