

Emotional wellbeing

Following a natural disaster

Our emotional reactions following stressful events

We all experience events differently. During and following a stressful and challenging experience, it is natural for people to experience a range of responses including intense stress reactions.

These reactions are not necessarily a sign of a lasting mental health concern. Research following natural disasters has consistently demonstrated that most people adjust and recover without additional or professional intervention and maintain this over time.

While most people get back to their usual functioning over time, some people will experience a decline in their mental health and wellbeing, or experience mental health problems in the months or even years after the initial event.

Everyone is different with different needs and situations. What will be useful will also vary from person to person. In the table over the page, there are links to resources and services that can assist with maintaining wellbeing during challenging times, as well as when we are experiencing more pronounced reactions and distress.



Mental health is a sliding scale

Everyone's mental health moves up and down along a sliding scale from positive to poor mental health or even mental ill-health, and is influenced by a range of things—including the effects of events and circumstances around us.

Every individual's response to a mental health challenge is different, and it's important for responses to match the level of need and preferences of the person seeking help.

People may find reaching out to existing connections, building stronger connections, and applying other self-care strategies helps to adjust and recover.

This isn't always the case and additional support may be needed.

Access all the resources in this guide by using this QR code.



Resources

How do you know it's time to seek additional help?

Most people recover from a disaster with the support of family and friends and don't need professional help. However, many people who could benefit from professional assistance do not seek help in a timely way, or at all.

Getting to know the common reactions to disaster and trauma will help you know when to seek professional support. The Beyond Blue resource [natural disasters and your mental health](#) identifies the common reactions people experience following a traumatic event, and the reactions that are of greater concern.

Sometimes friends, family and work colleagues can see changes that a person themselves cannot see. Understanding how to support or care for others can make a big difference. If you are concerned about someone it's important to encourage them to seek help.

It's useful to listen to the trusted advice of friends and family who may be concerned about you, and talk to a professional.

Start with your GP

A common first step for professional support about mental health concerns is approaching a general practitioner (GP). GPs can either help you themselves or they can refer you to other healthcare professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or occupational therapists.

When required, GPs can work with you to develop a [mental health treatment plan](#) that makes appointments with eligible allied health professionals more affordable.

Immediate and first few weeks	
General community	Directly impacted by disaster
Keep well	Mild distress

Giving to others and volunteering after a disaster is a good way to support your community. There are numerous organisations you can support, such as:

- [Australian Red Cross](#)
- [GIVIT](#)
- [Emergency Volunteering Qld](#)

Helping [family and friends](#) recover from flood

Look after your wellbeing using tips from [Dear mind](#)

[Well Mob](#) provides social, emotional and cultural wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

[Life in Mind](#) offers practical and emotional support for flood affected communities

There are resources to help you [support someone who has experienced a traumatic event](#)

[Birdie's Tree](#) is a story resource that can help young children make sense of what's happening

Headspace has resources for [supporting a young person](#) following a natural disaster

The way adults interpret and respond to disaster news can impact [children](#) and [teenagers](#)

[Head to Health](#) provides information and resources about supporting mental health and wellbeing

Beyond Blue's information about [common and concerning reactions to natural disaster](#)

Common responses to trauma and the impact of crisis on:

- [families](#)
- [babies](#)
- [children](#)
- [teenagers](#)

Advice for [supporting children to cope in natural disasters](#)

[Managing stress after a disaster](#)

Advice for parents on [how to support children impacted by disaster or community trauma](#)

Tips for [teens \(13-17 years\)](#) and [young people](#) on coping with a natural disaster

[Birdie's Tree](#) can help young children make sense of a natural disaster through story-telling

[Life in Mind](#) offers practical and emotional support for flood affected communities

Understand and look after your wellbeing using [Dear mind](#) resources

The Queensland Government's [disaster and emergency recovery](#) website has practical information

Immediate and first few weeks		After 4-6 weeks
Directly impacted by disaster		
Moderate distress	High distress	Ongoing distress

Information from Beyond Blue about [common and concerning reactions to natural disaster](#)

Common responses to trauma and the impact of crisis on:

- [families](#)
- [babies](#)
- [children](#)
- [teenagers](#)

[Managing stress after a disaster](#)

Advice for parents on [how to support children impacted by disaster or community trauma](#)

Tips for [teens \(13-17 years\)](#) and [young people](#) on coping with a natural disaster

Red Cross resources on [recovering from a disaster](#)

[NewAccess](#) is a free coaching program, available in [many parts of Queensland](#) for people finding it hard to manage life stress

Head to Health provides links to:

- [disaster support](#)
- [digital mental health](#) resources
- [This Way Up](#) online programs

MindSpot offers an [Indigenous Wellbeing Course](#) and a [digital mental health clinic](#)

Young people aged from 5–25 can talk to [KidsHelpline](#) at any time for any reason

Talk to trusted person at:

- [Lifeline](#) or call 13 11 14
- [KidsHelpline](#) (ages 5-25)—call 1800 55 1800

[Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support](#) or call 1800 177 833

Access [Beyond Blue support service](#) via phone (1300 22 4636), chat, email or online forums

Access the [Suicide Call Back Service for 24/7 telephone and online counselling](#)

Talk to your [general practitioner](#) (GP) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care provider

1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55) is a confidential [mental health telephone triage service](#) for Queenslanders that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services

[Support groups](#) can also be a helpful resource

Call:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [KidsHelpline](#) (ages 5-25) on 1800 55 1800

Talk to your [general practitioner](#) (GP) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care provider

Your GP can prepare a [mental health treatment plan](#) and refer you to a psychologist, other allied health provider, peer worker or psychiatrist

1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55) is a confidential [mental health telephone triage service](#) for Queenslanders that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services

In an emergency or crisis
If you think it is an emergency or someone's life is in danger **call Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance, or go straight to the closest **emergency department**.

Support services

Other options

Many other services offer counselling and other support to assist with concerns about thoughts, feelings and coping. They can be accessed either online, by telephone or face-to-face. They may be in community health centres, family support or neighbourhood centres or be offered by non-government organisations such as Centacare, Relationships Australia, Headspace centres or Lifeline. Workplaces often offer Employee Assistance Programs and schools, TAFEs and universities also offer student support services.

General community

- [Lifeline](#) offers 24/7 counselling. Phone 13 11 14, text 0477 131 114 or access [web chat](#).
- [1300 MH CALL](#) is a confidential mental health telephone triage service for Queensland's public mental health services. Phone 1300 64 22 55.
- Beyond Blue provides [information online](#) and also a support service 24/7 via [1300 224 636](#) as well as online [chat, email and forums](#).
- [Wellways helpline](#) provides support and referrals for people experiencing issues with their mental health, and their families, friends and carers. All helpline volunteers are 'peers'—people who have a lived experience of mental health issues. Phone 1300 111 500 Monday to Friday 9:00am to 9:00pm (except public holidays).

Children, young people and families

- [KidsHelpline website](#) has information for different age groups, web chat, email, and peer support as well as telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5–25 years. Phone 1800 55 1800 anytime, for any reason.
- [Parentline](#) provides age-specific online information as well as support, counselling, and education for parents. Phone 1300 301 300.
- [PANDA](#) Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia supports women, men and families affected by anxiety and depression during pregnancy and in the first year of parenthood. Phone 1300 726 306 Monday to Friday 9:00am to 7:30pm (AEST).
- A community trauma toolkit hosted by [Emerging Minds](#) contains online resources to help and support adults and children before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.
- [Headspace](#) and [e-headspace](#) provides centre-based, online and telephone-based support services.
- Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling provides [information, counselling and group](#)

[programs](#) for Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. Phone 1800 011 046.

Alcohol and other drugs support

- Adis [24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support](#) provides free phone support, information and referral for people with alcohol and other drug concerns. Phone 1800 177 833.

Family and domestic violence

- [1800RESPECT](#) 24-hour domestic violence helpline. Phone 1800 737 732.
- [DVConnect Womensline](#) telephone service offers 24/7 help to women experiencing domestic or family violence. Phone 1800 811 811.

Support for men

- MensLine offers [telephone and online support](#), information and referrals to help men with relationship and other problems. Call 1300 789 978.

LGBTIQ+

- [Diverse Voices](#) offers peer counselling service for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and their families and friends. Phone 1800 184 527 (from 3:00pm to midnight).

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

- Multicultural Connect Line is a helpline with an on-demand interpreter service. It offers free information, advice and referral to Queenslanders experiencing hardship, stress or worry. Phone 1300 079 020 or [fill in the web form to request a call back](#). Operates Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm, closed weekends and public holidays.

Carers

- [Arafmi](#) provides a range of supports for family, friends and carers of people with mental illness. Phone 1800 351 881.
- [Carers Queensland](#) has a range of specialised carer and disability support services. Phone 1300 747 636 or email info@carersqld.com.au.

Small business

- [Ahead for Business](#) assists small business owners to take action on their mental health and wellbeing and has resources on the [effects of floods on small business](#).
- [NewAccess for Small Business Owners](#) offers six sessions with a coach from a small business background, to help you overcome difficult issues and manage stress.
- [A small business owner's guide to creating a mental health and wellbeing plan](#) provides information about business and personal supports for small business operators.