

HANDOUT 6: IMPAIRMENTS IN DAILY FUNCTIONING

RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

Some disaster survivors experience difficulties in their relationships. Anxiety, depression, guilt, and anger can get in the way of feeling close to others, especially if you feel that no one understands you. In order to cope with these negative feelings, you may **withdraw from others** or **not participate in activities** that involve other people. You may also find that your family, friends, or loved ones have difficulty being around you because of your increased irritability, fear, or sadness. In extreme cases, **separations and divorces** may occur as a result of increased tension and arguments. If this happens, it may simply add to preexisting feelings of despair or loneliness. Another problem is that family members are also coping with their own reactions.

If you lost a loved one in a disaster, you may find it especially difficult to connect with others as you struggle with their grief and/or the stress of being alone. It is important to get support for what you are going through, even though it may be difficult to find people who can give you this support or hard to let yourself accept the support being offered. This is one of the reasons it can be useful to speak with a counselor. You will experience **additional burdens** if a spouse or partner was killed or seriously injured as a result of the disaster. This is not only because of the intense grief that you likely experienced but also because of having to take on new roles in your family.

WORK AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Some people have difficulty at work after a disaster because of mental health problems like anxiety and depression. This can come in the form of **missing days** of work, **calling in sick** more often, **being late** to work or late on specific deadlines, as well as other problems such as **disorganization** or **impaired concentration**. In extreme cases people may lose their jobs either because of these problems or because of company layoffs related to the disaster. This **job loss** can then create a **financial burden**. You may experience other financial burdens if your spouse or partner was also laid off, injured, or killed in the disaster. This may place more pressure on you to earn money for the family or to return to work if you weren't working before the disaster. In a large-scale disaster, work and finances may be even more unstable because of the impact on the region's or country's economic status.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

In the aftermath of a disaster, some people experience physical health problems. These can take the form of **major medical illnesses/conditions** directly caused by the disaster (e.g., a major injury caused by the disaster itself), or **the worsening of an existing physical conditions** due to the stress caused by the disaster. These health problems can make it difficult to fulfill your work and family responsibilities, which can make you feel worse about yourself.

In addition, you may find that your **appetite changed** after the disaster, either **increasing and feeling out of control** or **decreasing** to the point that you're not eating enough to stay healthy. These problems can have an impact on your mental health and day-to-day functioning.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY DAILY FUNCTIONING?

- Try to get enough sleep at night, as this is important in your physical and emotional health. Most people need about 8 hours of sleep per night, but you must find what your own body needs.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals and monitor connections between your eating patterns and your emotional state. Healthy eating is important for your physical and emotional health.
- Engage in regular physical exercise to improve your physical health and emotional well-being.
- Engage in activities that are comforting or soothing to you, such as spending time with loved ones, engaging in a favorite hobby, or relaxing in a warm bath. These activities increase your sense of pleasure and can also decrease your physical tension.

Maintain a daily routine. In the aftermath of a sudden, unexpected disaster, you need to have some sense of stability and keeping a regular routine can help with this.