## COMMON DISASTER WORKER STRESS REACTIONS

### Psychological and Emotional
- Feeling heroic, invulnerable, euphoric
- Denial
- Irritability and anger; anxiety and fear
- Worry about the safety of self or others
- Restlessness, sadness, depression, moodiness
- Distressing dreams
- Guilt or "survivor guilt"
- Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless
- Feeling isolated, lost, abandoned
- Apathy
- Identification with survivors

### Cognitive
- Memory problems
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Slowness of thinking and comprehension
- Difficulty setting priorities, making decisions
- Poor concentration
- Limited attention span
- Loss of objectivity
- Unable to stop thinking about disaster
- Blaming

### Behavioral
- Change in activity
- Decreased efficiency and effectiveness
- Difficulty communicating
- Increased use of humor
- Outbursts of anger
- Inability to rest or “let down”
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Change in patterns of intimacy and sexuality
- Change in job performance
- Period of crying
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Social withdrawal, silence
- Vigilance about safety of environment
- Avoidance of activities or places that triggers memories
- Proneness to accidents

### Physical
- Increased heartbeat, respiration’s
- Increased blood pressure
- Upset stomach, diarrhea, nausea
- Change in appetite, weight gain or loss
- Sweating or chills
- Tremor (hands or lip); Muscle twitching
- “Muffled” hearing
- Tunnel vision
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Headaches
- Soreness in muscles; Lower back pain
- Feeling a "lump in the throat"
- Exaggerated startle reaction
- Fatigue
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Decreased resistance to infection
- Flare-up of allergies and arthritis
- Hair loss

## HELPFUL COPING ACTIVITIES

### Cognitive
- Moderation
- Write things down
- Break large tasks into smaller one
- Get the most info you can to help make decisions
- Make small, daily decisions
- Anticipate needs; It is okay to ask for help
- Plan for the future
- Remember you have options
- Review previous successes
- Problem-solving
- Take mini-breaks

### Emotional
- Moderation
- Allow yourself to experience what it is that you feel;
  Find a “vent partner”
- Label what you are experiencing
- It’s OK to ask for help
- Be assertive when needed
- Keep communication open with others
- Keep communication as simple as possible
- Remember you have options
- Develop or use your sense of humor
- Use “positive” words and language

### Behavioral
- Moderation
- Spend time by yourself or with others
- Limit demands on time and energy
- Help others with tasks
- It’s OK to ask for help
- Do activities that were previously enjoyable
- Take different routes to work or trips
- Remember you have options
- Find new activities that are enjoyable
- Set goals, have a plan
- Relax

### Physical
- Moderation
- Aerobic exercise
- Routine sleep patterns
- Minimize caffeine, alcohol and drugs
- Eat well-balanced & regular meals
- Drink water
- Wear less-restrictive clothing
- Engage in some physical luxuries-baths, massage, exercise trainer
- Breathe

### Spiritual
- Moderation
- Find spiritual support; Discuss your (changed) beliefs with a spiritual leader
- Mindfulness; Meditation and Prayer
- Practice your faith/rituals
- Spiritual retreats/workshop
- Read spiritual literature