



NATURAL DISASTER BASIC HELP KIT

MANAGING PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND FINDING HELP

**PREPARED BY: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
COUNSELLING CENTRE 2016**

NATURAL DISASTER HELP KIT

Natural disasters are associated with destruction as well as loss of loved ones and irreplaceable belongings, and often this experience overwhelms the victim and their ability to cope with life in the future.

In light of the effect of cyclone Winston on the USP Community, the Counselling Centre has prepared a basic help kit to assist you in dealing psychologically with the aftermath of the disaster.

People experience Trauma after a disaster

A 'trauma' is a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time if they are not given the proper assistance. This is due to:

- You having firsthand experience of the devastation of the cyclone
- You have lost loved ones or personal belongings/home because of the cyclone
- You were injured or were at risk of physical harm or death during the cyclone
- You continue to hear tragic stories of other people's negative experiences

Signs that you may be traumatized

Regardless of how individuals experienced the disaster, it is important to note that this is different from what you would experience on a normal day. It is during this difficult time that people might experience intense fear, helplessness, and hopelessness that could overwhelm you.

Some indication that you may be experiencing trauma because of the cyclone is as follows:

- You find it very difficult to sleep
- You keep having flash backs of the cyclone
- When you think of the cyclone you get angry a lot and have intense feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- You find it hard to make friends with people
- You no longer motivated to do the things you love doing
- You have physical problems like headaches, stomach aches and dizziness or feeling numb
- You feel life is short and have the urgency to do things you have put on hold in the past e.g get married, travelling etc
- Sometimes you have a sudden urge to be very close to family and friends
- Over eating or under eating
- Noticeable decrease in performance at work or school
- Revisiting old beliefs and values of one's self

DO's of Managing the Trauma and stress

It is important to understand that many people who have experienced trauma have recovered, and that means that you can too. Here are some tips that can help you manage your trauma towards recovery:

Dealing with your mind:

- Make it a point to confront what has happened in your mind and understand the journey will be difficult
- Understand that the present trauma can stir up memories of previous negative experiences, learn to separate the two and deal with it separately
- Avoid making faulty assessments of yourself and be aware of any desire to self-punish
- Be aware of guilt feelings, if guilt is intense or persistence, seek appropriate help
- Allow your mind to rest in the fact that picking up the pieces towards recovery is huge enough for a community effort and is difficult individually

Activities that help:

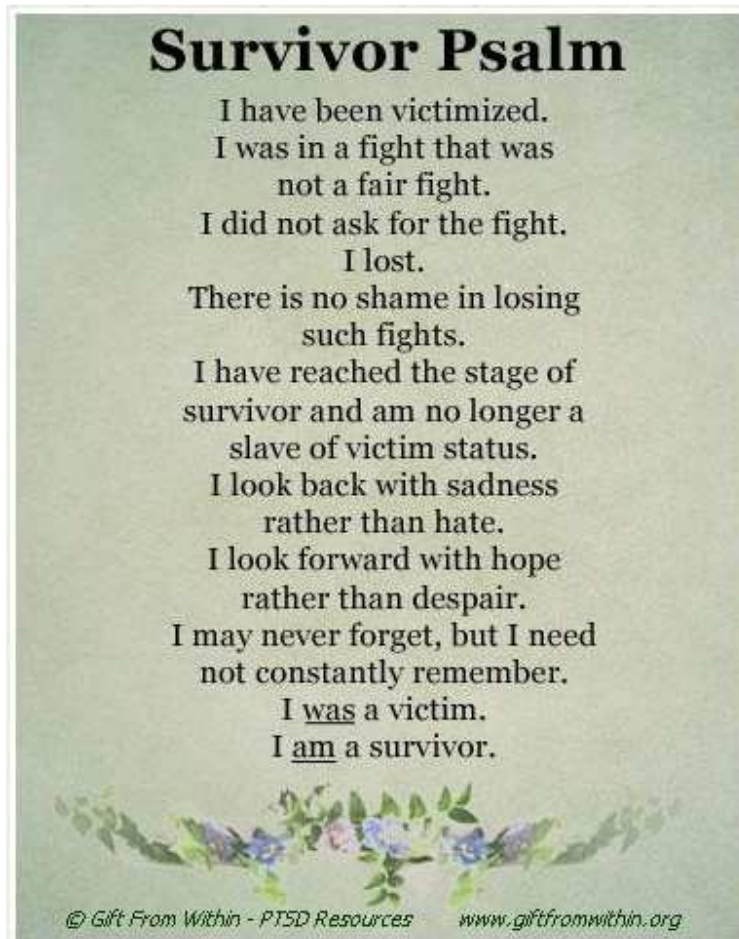
- Continue spiritual and religious practice in a group as these can serve as a source of encouragement
- Allow yourself time to rest if you are feeling tired, and remember that regular exercise is important
- Take time to do things that is relaxing, this will help your body and nervous system to settle and readjust
- If possible decrease environmental stressors – fix things that are fixable that might cause further stress
- Try and keep to your same routine keeping busy and structure your day
- Set for yourself realistic short term goals that are achievable
- Set appropriate limits for yourself and be accountable to others whom you trust
- Focus on what has worked well in the past when dealing with stress
- Learn to breathe deeply to calm yourself, shallow breathing happens when people are stressed and tense

DON'Ts of Managing the Trauma and stress

- Don't bottle up your feelings or isolate yourself but learn to talk to people you trust
- Avoid making any major decisions or big life changes
- Make sure you do not unnecessarily avoid certain activities or places
- Avoid risky behavior like - overuse of smoking, kava, alcohol or use of illicit drugs or sexual acting out as a way of coping

Encouragement

Dr. Frank Ochberg's "Survivor Psalm"



When to get Professional help

You should starting looking for help if you still feel it is really difficult to cope with the trauma symptoms mentioned above (page 2 - **Signs that you may be traumatized**). Especially if you have tried at a basic level to cope for over a month but it is still too distressing for you. The warning signs may include:

- Being unable to handle the intense feelings or physical sensations
- Feeling numb and empty
- Continuing to experience strong distressing emotions
- Continuing to have physical symptoms of being tense, agitated, and on edge
- Continuing to have disturbed sleep and/ or nightmares

- Having no-one to support you and with whom you can share your feelings and emotions
- Having relationship problems with friends, family and colleagues
- Increasing your use of alcohol or drugs.

Where to get Professional help from??

Someone to talk to

SUVA	WESTERN & NORTHERN
<p>University of the South Pacific Laucala Campus <i>Contact 1:</i> Centre: Counselling Centre Counselor: Mr. Nicholas Fuata Phone: 3232294 Email: fuata_n@usp.ac.fj</p> <p><i>Contact 2:</i> Centre: Counselling Centre Counselor: Mr. Saimone Tuni Phone: 3231797 Email: tuni_s@usp.ac.fj</p> <p>The wider Suva Area <i>Contact 1:</i> Centre: Flipit Counselor: Ms Gaylene Osborne Finekaso Mobile: 9913196 Email: gaylene@flipit.com.fj</p> <p><i>Contact 2:</i> Centre: ASK Counselor: Ms Asinate Korocawiri Mobile: 9419704 Email: positivemnd@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Contact 3:</i> Centre: ME Consultancy Counselor: Ms Margaret Eastgate Mobile: 9140483 Email: consultmeastgate@gmail.com</p>	<div> </div> <p><i>Contact 1:</i></p> <p>The office hours of operation are as follows: Mondays to Thursdays - 8:00am – 4:30pm Fridays - 8:00am - 4:00pm</p> <p>Lautoka Head Office - Empower Pacific</p> <p>2nd Floor Meghji Arjun Building, PO Box 5693, 157 Vitogo Parade, Lautoka</p> <p>Phone: +679 665 0482 Phone: +679 666 3307 Email: headoffice@empowerpacific.com Skype: empowerheadoffice</p> <p>Lautoka Branch - Empower Pacific</p> <p>Old Hospital Road Lautoka</p> <p>Phone : +679 625 4226</p>



Contact 4:

Suva Branch - Empower Pacific

CWM Hospital
(next to the Diabetic Clinic on Waimanu Road)
Suva
Phone : +679 310 0191



Contact 5:

Suva – Life Line

Wesley Church Counselling Services - LifeLine
PA GPO Box 862
SUVA
Tel: 679 302998 (Office & Counselling)

Nadi Branch - Empower Pacific

Nadi Hospital
Old Hospital Road
Phone : +679 623 3934

Labasa Branch - Empower Pacific

Civic Investment Building
Rosawa St
Labasa
Phone : +679 881 3111



Contact 2:

Ba – Life Line

Ba Methodist LifeLine Counselling Service
P.O. Box 192
BA
Tel: 679 670565 / 679 674364



“The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma.”

– Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*

For further queries please contact the following people:

Laucala Campus

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