

# Gulf Oil Spill: Get the Facts

## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY**  
LAKEVIEW CENTER  
1221 W. LAKEVIEW AVE.  
PENSACOLA, FL 32501  
(850) 469-3500

24-HOUR CRISIS LINE  
850.438.1617

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY

AVALON CENTER OF LAKEVIEW  
6024 SPIKES WAY  
MILTON, FL 32570  
850.437.8900

24-HOUR CRISIS LINE  
850.438.1617

## OKALOOSA COUNTY

BRIDGEWAY CENTER  
24-HOUR CRISIS LINE  
850.833.9200

## WALTON COUNTY

COPE CENTER  
24-HOUR CRISIS LINE  
850.892.4357

If you need additional behavioral health assistance, please contact your local community provider listed above.



## NATURAL DISASTERS VS. TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS

Not all disasters are the same, nor are their effects on the individual or community the same. Part of the impact depends on the individual's and the community's ability to cope with the short-term and long-term effects of the disaster and their overall resilience. Research does show that there are some common differences between naturally occurring disasters and disasters that are man made. Outlined below are some generalities related to natural and short term disasters.

Natural Disasters	Technological Disasters
Naturally occurring events such as hurricanes, tornados, floods, etc. that affect the environment and leads to financial, environmental and/or human losses	Catastrophic events caused by humans which result in toxic contamination of the environment and leads to financial, environmental and/or human losses
Typically follow a pattern of warning, threat, impact, rescue, inventory, remedy, recovery and rehabilitation	Trapped at impact stage for unknown period of time, but also have to deal with other stages all at once, sometimes in a very piecemeal fashion
Individuals and communities May have ability to pre-plan for the disaster and its aftermath e.g. the community and most individuals in it are prepared to the best of their ability for a hurricane	Usually no or minimal pre-planning occurs and usually not at the individual level
Outreach from others is immediate to help with the various stages; resources are offered to the community and individual	Outreach from others may be slow-waiting for an entity involved in the disaster to take responsibility; have to rely on community resources which may be scarce or inadequate to meet the demands of the event
Therapeutic Community: community and individuals pull together, bond for the good of all-social connectedness, activities are coordinated and focused on fostering a return to pre-disaster conditions	Corrosive Community: response is not as focused on community and individual recovery, outsiders with little or no connection to the community may be leading the recovery efforts, fears of the ongoing consequences of the disaster foster high levels of stress and anxiety, and conflict; individuals have to seek out help, may be involved in long term litigation, there is a lack of social connectedness, some individuals directly impacted may be eligible for recompense while others may not-creating community conflicts

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Natural Disasters	Technological Disasters
May experience ongoing stresses related to the secondary effects (the indirect consequences) of the disaster. This may include supply and housing shortages, job loss, economic impacts, ongoing disruptions in daily life, litigation, flood of media	May experience ongoing stresses related to the secondary effects (the indirect consequences) of the disaster. This may include supply and housing shortages, job loss, economic impacts, ongoing disruptions in daily life, litigation, flood of media, conflicts among politicians and government entities
After the disaster the individual and community can rebuild toward a pre-disaster state of being and toward closure, the ecosystem can begin recovery and re-growth	Impacts of the disaster are long-term and often unknown and lack closure, possible ongoing physical health, mental health, economic and ecological problems/damage, lingering primary and secondary effects on the community and individual
Adapted from: Coping with Technological Disasters: A User Friendly Guidebook, Prince William Sound Regional Citizen's Advisory Council, 12/2004	

## REACTIONS TO TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS

Listed below are some of the common reactions you can expect from a technological disaster. These reactions are the norm and not the exception and should be treated as such.

### Community Reactions to Technological Disasters

- Outsiders coming in and taking over
- Frustration by magnitude of the circumstances
- Lack of trust about the responders and their long-term goals
- Threats to public health
- Threats to local resources
- Lack of communication
- Suspended or overwhelmed business functions
- Varying viewpoints leading to divisiveness
- Employment disruption; workers leaving to work on response or loss of work
- Excess demands on public services
- Wanting to volunteer but not knowing how to do so or what training is needed
- Concerns regarding future financial stability of the community
- Feeling a loss of control and power
- Collective anger, hopelessness, depression

### Individual Reactions Related To Technological Disasters

- Fear, worry, anxiety, anger, distress, hopelessness related such things as:
  - \*disruption of daily life, \*threats to livelihood and lifestyle, \*loss of financial stability, \*witnessing destruction of ecosystem and resulting loss of resources, \*threats to basic needs—food, shelter, clothing, \*becoming separated from loved ones, \*concern for children, \*long-term litigation, \*threats to retirement, \*acceleration of an already negative economic trend (such as fish being imported into area markets and restaurants)
- Feeling helpless to help in the recovery process
- Feeling isolated and cut off from others
- Feeling a sense of doom and helplessness
- Fear about the future
- Survivor guilt
- Anniversary reactions to the event itself or some of the

### WHAT HELPS

- |  |                                      |   |
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| • Engage in community service.   | • Volunteer.                         | • Visit shut-in elders.                                   |
| • Spend time with a child.   | • Learn new coping skills.           | • Acknowledge your feelings.                              |
| • Learn to accept the disaster and its effects without letting it overwhelm and preoccupy you. | • Eat, sleep and exercise regularly. | • Avoid excess use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, caffeine . |
| • Seek help if you need it.  | • Focus on solutions not problems.   | • Monitor negative thinking.                              |