

## RESOURCE INFORMATION --- HURRICANE HARVEY

Author: Christine Reed, LCSW, Meyerland Area

With a traumatic life-changing event like Hurricane Harvey, many losses and emotional reactions can be experienced. This can include physical losses such as loss of life or bodily injury; material losses such as home, material possessions and property; loss of routine, jobs, pets, and other long-term disruptions and displacements. A range of emotional reactions such as the loss of feeling safe to experiences of grief, like fear, panic, anger, depression, helplessness, and sadness. These experiences and reactions can be brief or longer term, and range from temporary to chronic and reoccurring.

There are numerous self-help resources available online and in the form of various free apps available to download. There are more in-depth community resources available if one feels that the emotional reactions or depression is not lifting, or behavior patterns are troublesome such as overeating, drinking more than normal, remaining tearful, angry, or fearful.

Some helpful apps can be located through the Google or Apple Play stores. Search under the following topics such as relaxation, meditation, cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness, anxiety & panic attack, insomnia, and grief/bereavement. Look for free and highly rated apps, and try out the ones that appeal to you and fit with your needs. One I frequently recommend is "The Worry Box". It has a variety of functions including verbal meditations, music, a worry diary, and information on managing stress and changing your thoughts to manage feelings.

I also like "Ambience" as it has a variety of sounds and allows for mixing of some sounds for relaxation. Another favorite venue is YouTube. By searching under the topic of meditation and relaxation, there are a number of beautiful videos with various themes, music, pictures, and guided relaxation and visualization steps. Some of these are purposefully created with binaural beats which help to relax the brain and produce a deep state of relaxation by accessing alpha brainwaves. By practicing over time, you can train yourself to quickly enter a state of relaxation with the alpha brainwave pattern. This is actually how biofeedback works to help make changes with a variety of mental and behavioral patterns. Some of the YouTube videos are quite long and can be of great help with insomnia, and you can form a library of favorite go to videos.

Community Resources can also be accessed online. There are a variety of avenues available including individual, family, and group sessions. There have been several locations of support groups formed that specifically help with persons effected by Hurricane Harvey. Some have been available through local churches or temples. There are Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) offered by some employers and can be accessed through Human Resource departments. You can check with your health insurance company to see if you have MH/SA (Mental Health/Substance Abuse) or Behavioral Health coverage. These services are accessed by the customer service phone number or online insurance website to seek out providers of psychotherapy services. You search out services by your zip code, or problem issues (i.e., anxiety, depression, PTSD), or type of provider. The types of professionals that can help are clinical social workers(LCSW), family therapists(LMFT), licensed professional counselors(LPC), psychologists(MA, PhD), psychiatrists(MD-medical doctor). Generally speaking, psychiatrists can prescribe medications when needed, and the other providers listed can provide individual, family, and group therapy services. There are also nurse practitioners(NP), physician assistants(PA), and primary care physicians(PCP) that can also be of help.

In addition one can seek services through churches, temples, and service organizations that can be located online. Some of these include the Mental Health Association (clearing house of many social service, mental health agencies, and other services), Family Service Center, Jewish Family Services, Legacy Clinics, Fuller Life Family Therapy Institute ( provides an online list of sliding scale therapy agencies), Catholic Charities, [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) (provides extensive list of organizations that provide treatment referral services).

Also, never underestimate the value of having a crisis plan for yourself and your family in the event of a flood or hurricane. This can literally be a life saver and be a guide for steps to take which can provide safety and peace of mind. This would include many varied parts such as:

Flood insurance, evacuation plan (where to go, when to leave, who to stay with), documents needed, prize possessions or photos (or how to protect them), cash, medications, pet plans, food, water, flashlights, and security blankets for all. Have a waterproof radio, electronic chargers, and spare batteries for all devices. Of course, I always recommend KPRC for all news and weather reports and advice. They also have an excellent Hurricane Season brochure with all kinds of necessary and helpful advice.

Finally, be sure to always practice and develop self-care techniques. You are your own best source of help! Stress management includes eating well, getting adequate sleep and rest, and fun sources of exercise. Develop and practice healthy routines and habits. You can train your body and your mind. The thoughts you have create your feelings, and thus your state of mind and your emotional well-being. Your thoughts and what you say to yourself are as important as what you eat and do, maybe even more so. We can sometimes have habits of mind and get stuck in negative thoughts that can go round and round. Just as with your crisis safety plan, develop and practice a mental escape plan for trapped negative thoughts. When you identify and label irrational thoughts and feelings you can also develop ways to challenge and talk back with believable and strong positive thoughts to correct the direction of your mind. . Keep your expectations realistic. Be kind to others. And be kind to yourself.

With all that is available for us in Houston and in the world, we can survive, heal, and thrive!