

News Release

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We're Halfway Through

Tampa, Florida (August, 2011). Hurricane season is at about it's midpoint since the season ends November 30, 2011. Today it was announced that as the most recent tropical storm was being downgraded to a trough of low pressure, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted a busier hurricane season than was announced just three months ago. The initial May, 2011 prediction was twelve to eighteen storms with six to ten of them being hurricanes to the current prediction of fourteen to nineteen storms with seven to ten of them being hurricanes. While some individuals may continue in a state of denial that they will ever experience the impact of such predictions, many have experienced feeling anxious and concerned when another hurricane season arrives. In some areas of the country, individuals are still in the process of recovering from the last hurricane season, tornados, flooding and other weather conditions and now we are in the middle of another season. Government officials, including national, state and local, keep reminding citizens to stock up on supplies, make evacuation plans and arrange for pet care. It isn't too late to make plans to be aware in terms of social and emotional readiness.

According to Charles R. Figley, Ph.D. of the FSU Traumatology Institute, there are four phases individuals face whenever there is the possibility of a potential disaster and each phase has it's own set of demands:

- **Anticipation and Preparation**
- **Disaster Impact**
- **Immediate Post-Disaster Impact**
- **Long-term Post-Disaster Impact**

This article will deal with the first phase.

Individuals react differently to anticipating a potential disaster. Some make plans as advised long in advance of the possibility of a hurricane. They heed the warnings and stock up on supplies, plan an evacuation route and notify out-of-area family and friends of their pre-determined, and if necessary alternate, route. They buy products to secure their home, make sure they have all important documents and pictures/records of their possessions in a safe place, and even make arrangements for a place to stay in the event of evacuation. They keep an eye on the information being released and start their travel well before the roads become parking lots. This can help an individual and family to restore a sense of control over the uncontrollable.

Others enter into a state of denial thinking that the “bullet has been dodged” multiple times and will be again. No worry. No planning. Just a wait and see attitude.

Other individuals engage in a panic response. They are the ones that get to the store when the shelves are empty of water, when the home supply stores are out of plywood or batteries, and spend their time running from place to place to get what they can.

Social support is a major factor in anticipating any situation that is out of one’s control. Talk with family, friends and neighbors to both offer and receive support. Maintain a rational approach - this will go a long way in minimizing anxiety and panic. Remember that each individual, even within the same family, will react differently. Even small children will pick up either a calm or frenzied response based on how others around them might be acting. As Dr. Figley says, “Be aware kids know when you are scared.” Different age groups respond differently to the same event. It is important to realize that small children may not be able to verbalize their fears and concerns. Listen and reassure them. Involve everyone in the planning - even a small child can let you know what toy they want to have with them. Don’t leave children alone. Encourage children to talk.

Anxiety and worry saps us of our energy, may keep us awake at night and change how we are able to deal with everyday changes – you don't have to keep worrying since help is a phone call away. What can you do if don't even know where to begin? Just call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. It is that simple. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively dealing with whatever might be impacting your life. Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.