

Disaster Self Care Action Plan for School Teachers

Before a traumatic event...

Establish Contacts

Before a traumatic event occurs, it is an excellent idea to think about the individuals that form your support network and consider when and how you would reach out to these individuals. Having these contacts in place can help to reduce your anxiety if, for example, you find yourself in a lock-down situation at your school.

1	If I need to ask one person to get a message to my family and friends, I will ask:	Name: Phone Number:
2	If I need to ask someone to watch my children, I will ask:	Name: Phone Number:
3	If I need someone to take care of my house, I will ask:	Name: Phone Number:
4	If I need someone to take care of my pets, I will ask:	Name: Phone Number:
5	If I need to talk to someone about what I have experienced, I will contact:	Name: Phone Number:
6	If I feel that I am having trouble coping, I will contact the following mental health professional: (Contact the National Mental Health Association for information about services in your community: 1-800-969-NMHA (6642).)	Name: Phone Number:

Plan Activities

It is also a good idea to think about your daily activities following a traumatic event even before any traumatic event has occurred. Having a plan for these activities will help you to remember to take care of yourself and to lead as normal a life as possible during a stressful time.

1	To relax and temporarily distract myself, at least once a day I will spend time: (Examples: watching a comedy on TV, reading a novel.)	
2	If I feel like I just need to get away for awhile, I will go to: (Examples: a neighbor's house, the movie theater, my favorite park.)	
3	For exercise, everyday I will: (Examples: take the stairs at work, walk the dog, go jogging.)	
4	To reward myself for handling a stressful time well and remind myself about the things that I enjoy, I will: (Examples: order dinner in, buy a new outfit.)	

The above lists will most likely supplement your existing emergency plan. If you haven't yet created an emergency plan for your family, the Department of Homeland Security has information on their website that may be helpful to you. This site walks you through the logistical decisions that are necessary for the creation of a Family Emergency Plan. (http://www.ready.gov/family_plan.html).



After a traumatic event...

Checklist

Despite our best preparations, we are sometimes so preoccupied by a stressful event that we put our basic needs on hold, which can have negative consequences for our mental and physical health. Use the following checklist as another reminder to take care of yourself:

Communicate with your own family members to be reassured about their safety, and reassure them about your own safety.	
Take regular breaks in order to avoid overextending yourself.	
Get an adequate amount of sleep. Most adults require 7 to 8 hours each night.	
Remember to eat well. Eating healthily will make you feel better physically and could help your mental state.	
Exercise to relieve stress.	
Set realistic goals for what you can accomplish each day. Establish priorities, pace yourself, and focus on what you can control. My goal for today is to: _____. My goal for tomorrow is to: _____.	
Celebrate small personal successes and the successes of your students.	
Know when help is needed, and be assertive in asking for help.	
Speak with a behavioral health specialist. Behavioral health resources available to you might include employee assistance, or a personal psychotherapist or counselor.	
Nurture yourself, and do not stop communicating with family and friends.	
Listen to children, not only for their sake, but also for yours. Children often view situations with more clarity and purity--helping to put things in perspective	
Acknowledge that no one "can do it all."	
There are also some things that you should make sure that you are NOT doing after a traumatic event:	
Don't attempt to convince yourself and others that everything is fine.	
Don't tell others that they have to "be strong," or that that you know exactly how they are feeling.	
Don't try to take care of your co-workers if you feel mentally unable to do so.	
Don't blame yourself for the traumatic event or any of its consequences.	
Don't be afraid to ask someone else how they are holding up.	
Don't try to persuade others to feel something different because you don't understand their reactions to an incident or because you feel differently.	
Don't use drugs, alcohol, or excessive amounts of caffeine to cope with your stress.	
Don't feel pressured to talk if you are not yet ready to discuss your feelings.	

