

Recovery from flood disaster

Victoria is experiencing its worst flood on record. As the flood waters recede in coming days and weeks, the extent of damage to property and personal belongings will be revealed. Enormous loss will be experienced on all levels, for the individuals, families and communities affected.

A natural disaster can be overwhelming - the physical impact, grieving over lost items including treasured mementos, photos, and the loss of pets. It takes time and energy to clean up, process insurance claims, replace property.

People busy themselves doing what they can to productively recover from the disaster. Once life starts to resemble normality, after the clean-up is over and we slow down, can be when the grief and loss catches up with us. It is critical that we support ourselves and one another through both of these impact times. Children particularly can be overwhelmed by the disaster. Children most often let us know they are not coping through a change in behaviour.

Tips for managing after the crisis:

1. Don't be afraid to talk about how you are feeling.
2. The physical work of recovery assists with the sense of moving forward but be careful not to overdo it.
3. Remember to eat regularly, be mindful of sleeping patterns, and monitor alcohol consumption.
4. Set yourself a reasonable 'to do' list each day. Don't allow the clean up to consume you 24/7; take time for a conversation with a friend, or a walk or drive to change the scenery.
5. Accept help that is offered, don't go it alone.
6. Stay connected with family, friends, community supports.
7. Be alert for changes in children's behaviour.
8. Reflect positively on your achievements in pulling everything back together.
9. Reflect on those family or friends or neighbours that helped out, also on what you have done for others.
10. Continue to talk about the experience when you need to.

This may be a good time to talk to someone with skills in the area, a local community counselling service can assist.