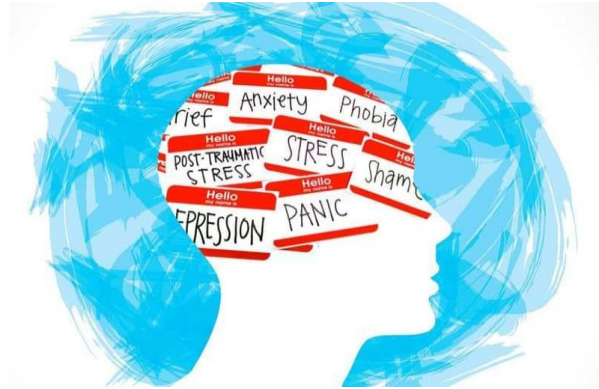


Taking Care of Your Mental Health After Disasters



Louisiana is no stranger to experiencing disasters including the COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, flooding, and freezes. It can be mentally draining dealing with disasters. Our homes are a place of safety and security, but when they are damaged it can bring on feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. It is important to recognize these feelings and how to cope with them. Julie Este-McDonald, MA, LPC, owner, and founder of the Salt and Light Collaborative is a Psychotherapist, Pastoral Counselor, and Life Coach. She believes it is important to address three components after a disaster: **physical, emotional, and spiritual.**

For the **physical** aspects, it's important to have practices that set us up for success as far as emotional regulation is concerned. Make sure you get enough sleep (7-8 hours a night), eating well, and hydrating. When these things are not in place, symptoms of anxiety and depression can exacerbate.

For **emotional** components, it's important to do things that help you to process emotions such as: physical activity, meditation, or prayer. It is also significant to have some people that you trust that you can talk to. Counseling is another important aspect! It is a safe space for you to be able to process everything that is happening in your life and give you tools for your emotional toolbox.

According to Julie Este-McDonald, **spiritually**, you want to make sure that you are connecting to something bigger than yourself, regardless of your beliefs. We are built for connection, and unfortunately, that has been very difficult in the past couple of years. We're seeing the result of the lack of connection with increased anxiety and depression. It's important to connect how you can in a way that you feel safe to do.

If you find yourself experiencing any negative feelings, anxiety, or having trouble coping with excess stress, **don't be afraid to ask for help!**

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