How to cope with your feelings before, during, and after an emergency (Audio Transcript)

Emergencies can be stressful for anyone, and feeling this way is common.

As a person with a disability, you may experience access barriers that make emergencies more stressful.

Stress can cause feelings of fear, anger, or sadness …

… and even make it harder to sleep and make decisions.

Fortunately, you can take steps now to help support your mental health and manage stressful events—like emergencies—in the future.

If possible, consider any of these tips:

Take care of your body. Try to eat healthy, exercise often, and get plenty of sleep. Stay away from alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or medication that has not been prescribed to you.

If you have a mental health condition, keep following the treatment plan from your doctor. Tell your doctor or someone you trust if you experience any new symptoms.

Connect and share your feelings with friends, family, or other people who support you.

Try taking deep breaths or doing activities that make you happy and support your mental health.

Stay informed by watching, listening to, or reading the news for updates, but try to take breaks from the news to protect your mental health. Try to take breaks from social media, too.

While it is important to stay informed, try to focus on the activities that help you stay calm, and plan to do them.

Remember, many people feel stressed during an emergency …

… and it may take time to be comfortable with your thoughts and feelings after an emergency.

It is okay not to feel okay and to ask for the help you need.

If you feel stressed during or after an emergency, call the free Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990. It is available in multiple languages, including American Sign Language.

If you are having thoughts about suicide or harming yourself, call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. The lifeline will connect you with free and confidential support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Lastly, if you evacuate or leave your home to go to a shelter, ask if they have a crisis counselor or mental health worker available to help you.

Your mental health is always important, especially during an emergency.

Use these tips to help support your mental health now, to prepare for stressful events—like emergencies—in the future.