

Coping with Anxiety and Stress – the recent events in Japan

As the world mobilizes to help victims of Friday's 8.9-magnitude earthquake that unleashed a devastating tsunami on Japan, all of us hope for the safety and well-being of the survivors. As your Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) provider, PPC Canada would like to extend our support during this difficult time.

The news of such a devastating natural disaster can cause various physical and emotional reactions to this event including fear, anxiety and stress. These can be normal responses to an event of this nature, and although everyone will react differently, understanding our common signs of stress and using simple steps to lessen the impact of stress, can help us all.

Everyone reacts to a traumatic event differently, depending on factors such as physical proximity to the event, level of personal involvement and loss associated with the event, level of personal stress prior to the event and the amount of support received during and following the incident.

Identifying Increased Levels of Stress and Anxiety

The stress responses that these events can prompt range in severity from person to person; the greater our anxiety, the greater the impact on our normal day to day functioning. Signs that stress and anxiety may be having an impact on your life include:

- Frequent worrying that distracts you from your ordinary activities
- Thinking often about “worst case scenarios”, in which bad things happen to you or someone you care about
- Difficulty sleeping
- Finding less pleasure or fulfillment from everyday activities
- Feeling irritable, angry, or sad
- Experiencing changes in your eating habits or appetite

Who can be affected?

Anxiety and fear can affect anyone, irrespective of gender and age. You may be more affected by the fear of infection if you've experienced a previous difficult

encounter with illness.. In addition, individuals with previous episodes of anxiety, depression, or who have been through a significant loss are also more likely to experience stress and anxiety symptoms.

Helpful Hints

There are simple steps you can take to remain emotionally healthy which will assist you to refocus your energy on positive thoughts and activities. Try some of the following suggestions and follow-up with another self-check to see whether your level of stress and anxiety have decreased:

- **Seek out reliable information:** Some sources of information are more reliable and fact based than others. Some news outlets report on rumours and repeat the most alarming facts most often. Others communicate facts, useful information, and verify their reporting constantly. Consider the tone and evidence behind the news you encounter, and choose to pay attention to those which are the most reliable
- **Limit the time you spend seeking out news of the outbreak:** Setting aside only a short, fixed time each day to gather meaningful updates can help you stay focused on your own life and tasks
- **Talk to those you trust:** Sharing your thoughts and fears with friends and family can be a great way to reduce the power of negative thoughts
- **Look after yourself:** Healthy eating, exercise and sleeping 7-8 hours/night can bolster your ability to cope
- **Try some relaxation techniques:** You can quickly bring down your heart rate and blood pressure by breathing deeply and slowly. Close your eyes and concentrate on breathing in to a count for three, and then out for a count of six
- **Know when to seek professional advice and support:** If stress and anxiety continue to affect your life consider contacting PPC Canada—we are here to help

Call us at
1-800-663-9099

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