

Desensitisation

Once you have heard a number of similar warning messages, you may begin to feel that nothing is really going to happen. The messages can be repetitive, and it may happen that the threat of the disaster becomes just that, a threat. The disaster may miss or simply just doesn't happen.

What happens:

You may then stop listening and attending to the warnings because you become 'desensitised', that is, you cannot maintain constant 'emergency status', and the anxiety which accompanies each message may result in some 'switching off'.

What to do:

Watch out for this, as you may miss critical new information and start behaving as though things are really 'back to normal'.

False Sense of Security

It is also possible and indeed common for people to experience a false sense of security

Human Response to Stressful Events

The Importance of Coping

It is natural to feel alarmed and anxious (worried) in stressful or threatening situations. This is called “**arousal**” and it is your body’s way of preparing you to meet the challenge of the situation or to escape from it.

Because we all cope with threatening situations in different ways and the thought of the possibility of a threat, like a natural disaster can be stressful in itself, it is important for people to be able to recognise, understand and cope with their own particular emotional responses to emergency situations.

People Cope and Respond Differently

People differ in their response to stressful events such as a disaster warning (for example, a cyclone alert). You may not be very worried or concerned by disaster warning situations but other family members, friends or neighbours may be. If they have been through a disaster event before, this experience may have made them quite at risk to feeling anxious (worried) and frightened in a situation of disaster threat and uncertainty.

It is therefore useful to know something about the way people respond to stressful events and to be able to provide some comfort, a ‘cool’ head and some practical advice and support to others.

Suggestion:

Once you've got your emotional responses to a manageable level, it's time to focus on the practical steps you can take to help yourself cope.

Glossary of Terms used in this Guide

Brainstorm

where people get together and spontaneously suggest ideas and strategies in a group situation, in which all

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