

Awareness *Endurance* *Recovery*



Foreword

Much has been written about the physical effects and requirements in preparation for natural disaster but we are all human and we all cope with natural disaster in different ways, yet there is little available to help us cope as individuals and as a community from a psychological viewpoint when confronted with natural disaster.

This training package is intended to help community leaders to better equip the general community to cope with the psychological effects of natural disaster before, during and after the event. According to Emergency Management Australia, a community is better able to cope if it is prepared for what might happen.

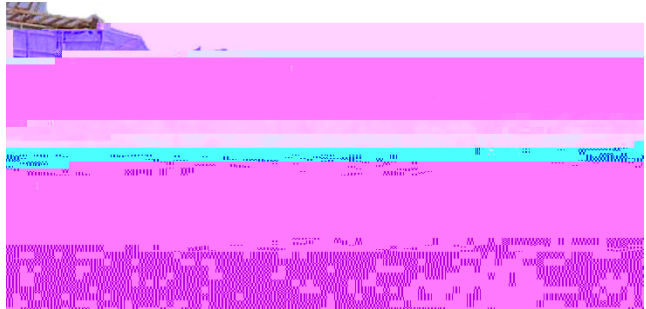
The package aims to enhance both psychological and physical preparedness of the 3 stages of any natural disaster, namely pre, during and post disaster phases.

The research used to compile this kit was taken from research undertaken by Associate Professor Joseph P. Reser and Doctor Shirley A. Morrissey of the School of 7al and Cyclone Ja ccn cn CairnEj-0.7 Tc 0.0029 Tw 11.998 0 0 11.998 99.2642 692(159T

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Compiled, edited and initial publication by Michael Owen
Michael Owen & Assoc. (07) 54657646

Reproduced by: Centre for Disaster Studies, James Cook University
PO Box 6811, Cairns, Queensland Australia
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- b Lifeline
- b Cairns City Council
- b Integrated Mental Health Services
- b Housing Queensland
- b Q-Build
- b Centrelink



Contents of the Kit

- b Trainer's Manual
- b OHT's for Trainer and photocopying, including a Microsoft PowerPoint Slideshow file.
- b Trainer's Instructions
- b Psychological Preparedness Guide - Participant resources
- b Copy of all file content on CD
- b Instructions for accessing file information from CD

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Introduction – Why the need for a Psychological Preparedness Kit

Most of us in Australia reside in areas of threat from natural disaster, whether it be from cyclone, bushfire, flood, draught, tornado, or earthquake. We are generally aware of emergency procedures relating to our physical needs...and if we aren't, literature is most likely available at local council chambers, emergency service providers, through community groups, etc. This literature will most likely provide information like emergency service and help agencies, physical requirements like torches, radios, batteries, water, etc., steps to secure our homes, etc. Some will include information about evacuation procedures, and even about household insurance.

Virtually nothing has been written about how to prepare ourselves psychologically before during and after a natural disaster. While individuals cope differently with events around us, there are some strategies that can be used to help prepare ourselves better in order that injuries and lives may be saved during natural disasters.

According to Emergency Management Australia...

***“a community is
better able to cope
if it is prepared for
what might happen”***

This means both physical and psychological preparedness...

Awareness, Endurance and Recovery

Who Can Deliver this Program?

The program was been written for delivery by community leaders for distribution to the general community.

Aims of the Program

The program aims to provide a tool for delivery of workshops and distribution of information through community education and awareness by:

- b Increasing the community's awareness of psychological processes involved in preparing for possible disaster situations;
- b Training community leaders to distribute this information and the relevant research findings to the general community – on training;
- b Enhance a community's ability to cope with n trTw 11.998311.998 42.5135 468.6831 Tm(E

Overview - Elements

Why do we need to understand beforehand about the way we think, feel and act in an emergency situation?

Understanding that we will all feel and react differently to a threat, and that for some people the threat can be very stressful.

Understanding the different ways people might think about the threat of a natural disaster?

Glossary of Terms used often in this Kit

is a mood state characterised by negative feelings and bodily symptoms of tensions in which a person apprehensively anticipates future danger of misfortune. Anxiety may be expressed subjectively as unease, worry and/or physiological responses

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

refers to the thoughts and behaviours individuals employ in stressful circumstance

is the process of reducing sensitivity and increasing the ability to respond to changes in your environment

A person (or persons) responsible for the delivery of the program

is an immediate alarm reaction to dangerous or life threatening emergencies (the fight or flight response)
Fear is a present orientated mood state

someone who risks loss or injury based on false beliefs and/or incorrect assumptions

refers to those preparations people make in readiness for a disaster situation (for example, tidying the yard, buying in batteries and food supplies

Most natural disasters are preceded by a series of Warnings. Whether the threat is a cyclone, bush fire, flood, severe storm, or another type of natural disaster, most often there will be a series of “warnings” on television, radio and in newspapers.

The “warnings” have traditionally focused on how serious or close the threat is and on basic safety and survival needs when confronted with a natural disaster. For example, there may be repeated reminders about buying batteries for torches and radios, having gas bottles filled, ensuring a supply of fresh water and the lists go on.

But...how do these “warnings” affect us emotionally? What are we likely to feel? How are we going to cope with these feelings and emotions? Are they going to affect our ability to prepare ourselves effectively if the warning situation develops into an actual natural disaster situation? How might we respond next time if we do not take steps to prepare ourselves psychologically? How are family members and other people close to us going to be effected?

- b Provide an explanation as to why we should be psychologically prepared
 - b Provide an explanation of the range of feelings likely to be experienced in the face of a disaster warning situation and/or in the face of a natural disaster
 - b Increase awareness of the types of thoughts and emotions people may have and experience about future disasters
 - b Increase awareness of the link between the way individuals think, feel and act in the face of impending disaster.
-
- b Brief introduction
 - b Viewing of a video of a recent disaster situation – designed to heighten the emotional response for later activities. (Universities, Local Councils, Emergency Services Organisations, etc. should be able to provide an appropriate video).
 - b Brainstorming and identifying some of the feelings aroused by impending disasters experienced during the viewing of the video (in small groups of say 4 to 5, and then feedback to whole group)
 - b “ undertaken individually and then discussed amongst the group
 - b Presentation of regarding risk perception by the trainer
 - b “ undertaken individually and discussed with the group
 - b Identifying behaviours in the pre-disaster period discussed with the group.

Introduction



Trainer's Instructions

Preparation

Prior to running the program, facilitators should familiarise themselves with this manual and pay particular attention to:

Example only



¾ hour

- b _____ that will be displayed at various locations throughout the trainers guide on the right hand side of the page (as per the example to your right). The program has been written for delivery over a 6-hour period and so it is important that you keep to the times to ensure all content is covered (just in case, we've included a ¼ hour leeway for the first section which should take between 2¾ and 3 hours to complete).
- b _____. An appropriate video, depicting graphic scenes of an actual disaster appropriate to your region should be borrowed, hired or purchased. These can be obtained through emergency service organisations, local council, libraries, etc.
- b _____ from local councils, Emergency Service organisations, etc outlining suggested procedures to follow relevant to the type of disaster(s) likely to threaten your particular area or region.
- b _____. These might include agencies providing services such as counselling, grief counselling, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, etc). Such a list should also be available through local councils, Emergency Service organisations, etc.
- b _____, including:
 - b Handouts photocopied (1 copy per participant of each). These will include:
 - b Participant's Psychological Preparedness Guide
 - b Overview – Elements (**Handout #1**)
 - b Worry and Anxiety Table (**Handout #2**)
 - b Impending Disaster Quiz (**Handout #3**)
 - b Pre-Disaster - The Warnings Stage Summary Sheet (**Handout #4**)
 - b Overhead projector (both slides and PowerPoint slide show available). The overheads are numbered in order on the bottom of each slide.
 - b Disaster video, VCR and television. You should have viewed the tape first and forwarded the tape to the position you wish to start viewing from. Check the VCR and television are set up and working properly before the program commences
 - b Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
 - b Seating for the appropriate numbers attending
 - b Work tables for participants
 - b Extra pens and note paper
- b
 - b Throughout the program various activities will be undertaken by participants and you should familiarise yourself with these when you read through the manual.



At the Start of the Program



¼ hour

- b Make sure you have the Trainer's Manual in front of you at all times
- b Show the "Awareness, Endurance, Recovery" overhead slide (**overhead #1**)
- b Trainers should introduce themselves
- b Hand out a copy of the participant's Psychological Preparedness Guide to each participant
- b Briefly explain the aims of the program (page 4 of the Trainer's Manual and in participant's Psychological Preparedness Guide)
- b Hand out the "Overview – Elements" handout (**Hand out #1**) and briefly explain the content of the program (page 5 of the Trainer's Manual)





(overhead #3)

- b A disastrous event in the near future
- b A sense of little or no control over an act of God or nature

1.2 Recognising Our Feelings

Understanding that we will all feel and react differently to a threat, and that for some people the threat can be very stressful.



Trainer's Instructions



¾ hour

Following section 1.1 (of why we should be psychologically prepared) and prior to section 1.2, play 10-15 minutes of an appropriate disaster video. The video should be viewed first so the facilitator is aware of the videos content and pre-set to the most appropriate spot.

Briefly show the “1.2 Recognising Our Feelings Overhead?” overhead slide (overhead #6)

In this sub-section the facilitator will:

- b Play the video
- b Assist the group to brainstorm the feelings experienced whilst watching the video
- b Discuss differences in feelings experienced while watching the video and then imagine a similar situation in their own communities
- b Discuss normal reactions to disaster and disaster threats

After completion of the video, trainers should split the group into smaller groups of 4 to 5 people to discuss the feelings suggested or they experienced whilst viewing the video. Key points of discussion should include:

- b How they would feel if they were confronted with a natural disaster warning;
- b A recognition that not all people will experience negative feelings about impending disasters;
- b The difference kinds of feelings within their group.

Someone within each sub-group should also write down why individuals felt the way they did, for example:

Person A

or

Person B

Give these sub-groups around 15 minutes to brainstorm and ask one person from each of the groups to present their findings whilst you list the key points from each group on the whiteboard (you could get someone from the group to do this for you).

Pass out “Worry and Anxiety” Table (handout #2)

Discuss the findings and discuss normal reactions to disaster warning situations and disaster events using the table (in handout #2) in the notes on the next page.



1.3 Understanding thoughts about disaster

Understanding the different ways people might think about the threat of a natural disaster?



Trainer's Instructions



¾ hour

Briefly show the “1.3 Understanding thoughts about disaster” overhead slide (**overhead #7**)

In this sub-section the facilitator will:

- b Hand out the “IMPENDING DISASTER QUIZ” (**Handout #3**) for completion by each participant and discuss the results.
- b Discuss psychological “TRAPS”. These include:
 - b ‘Unreality’ of the event
 - b when you haven’t been through a natural disaster before it is difficult to imagine what it would be like and this can lead to us telling ourselves that it is not real.
 - b Worry triggered by actual disaster preparation and warning messages
 - b Confusion of uncontrollable event with controllable consequences
 - b a feeling that you cannot control a natural disaster and so there is nothing you can do
 - b Desensitisation
 - b a feeling that nothing is really going to happen
 - b False sense of security
 - b Gambler’s fallacy (myth or false belief)
 - b Suggestibility
 - b when people do whatever someone else is doing without thinking about it

■







Another cause for feelings of worry and helplessness when a natural disaster threatens is the repeated thought that a natural disaster is an awesome and uncontrollable 'act of nature'.

~~These feelings of helplessness often cause you to do nothing.~~

It is important to remind yourself that although you cannot exercise control over the natural disaster, you are not helpless to protect yourself and your family from its consequences. Undertaking all the protective m

It is common to reassure yourself with the thought that a disaster is unlikely to really hit my community or my house, and/or to take comfort from the thought that this house came through the last disaster or that another disaster event is not yet 'due'.

Whether a disaster strikes this year does not depend on how long it has been since we had one. This error in judgement which people make is known as the "Gambler's Fallacy". People also tend to under-estimate personal risk and overestimate personal control over events. It is far better to have a more realistic assessment of how likely it is that a disaster will hit your community and what its effects might be.

Trust your disaster warning messages not your gambling hunches and do all the things you should do according to your local disaster emergency guide.

When people are frightened and anxious, it is easy to become overwhelmed and confused, and do whatever someone else is doing, without thinking about it.

Uncertainty, along with a sense of urgency that 'something' must be done can also lead to a blind following of another's anxious behaviour. However, if you are coping well, chances are that those around you will follow your good example.

Don't be afraid to take charge if that is what you should do. It is important that you know what should be done, as well as behaving in a cool, collected way.

1.4 Understanding our behaviours and actions before disaster preparation

The sorts of things people do when they become aware of the threat of a natural disaster.



Trainer's Instructions



¼ hour

Briefly show the “1.4 Understanding our behaviours and actions before disaster preparation” overhead slide (overhead #8)

In this sub-section the facilitator will:

- b Brainstorm with the group about the sorts of things people do when they hear of a potential disaster in the area
- b Show the “Ways people act when they hear that the threat of a natural disaster is the area” overhead slide (overhead #9)
- b Discuss the overhead diagram “THINKING, FEELING, ACTING”

This section is about identifying the way we react to disasters threats or warnings

Ask the group what sort of things people are likely to do when they hear about a disaster situation.

After some brief discussion show the “Ways people act when they hear that the threat of a



Feelin

Pre Disaster – The Warning Stage

Summary & Question Time



Trainer's Instructions



½ hour

You have now completed stage 1 Pre-Disaster – The Warning S



Pre Disaster – The Warning Stage

Summary Sheet

- b Better physical preparation
- b Less fear, less hopelessness, more confidence and better coping
- b A significantly better understanding, anticipation and identify 11.sto:

2 Coping During the Natural Disaster or Warning Event

- 2.1 Identifying stressful feelings and reactions
- 2.2 Managing stressful feelings and reactions
- 2.3 Coping with a real threat or severe warning
- 2.4 Helping others to cope

- b Provide information about the normal reactions to increasing stress with respect to an impending disaster or severe disaster warning.
- b Increase individual's awareness of the range of feelings and thoughts likely to be encountered during the warning or event.
- b Increase awareness of basic coping strategies for managing the feelings encountered.

- b Identifying normal psychological responses to stressful situations discussed with the group, including physical symptoms (signs).

- b “ ” undertaken individually and discussed with the group.
- b Discussing, with the group, the way we feel in stressful situations and how this is affected by the way we breathe and the things we tell ourselves.

- b Discussing, with the group, which of the feelings are likely to increase as the impending disaster gets closer.

- b Brainstorm with the group about how others may be coping.

This section is about identifying and coping with the way we think and feel during disasters and disaster warning situations.

In terms of feelings, a warning situation is as psychologically 'real' as an actual 'hit', and the worry and uncertainty that accompany warning situations require as much preparation

2.1 Identifying Stressful Feelings & Reactions

Understanding the feelings that different people may experience.



½ hour

Normal Responses to Stressful Situations

b

- b Shortness of breath
- b Dizziness
- b Nausea (the state that precedes vomiting)
- b Flushes (a response of body tissues to injury or irritation; characterized by pain and swelling, and redness and heat)
- b Palpitations (a shaky motion caused by rapid or irregular heartbeat)
- b Numbing and tingling
- b Blood pressure rises
- b Tense Muscles

b

during the disaster threat period

- b I can't cope
- b This is awful
- b We're going to get hurt
- b The whole town will be washed away/burnt down/wiped out/destroyed
- b We'll all die

b

- b 'Freeze' or do nothing
- b 'Panic'
- b Heightened vigilance and nervous activity

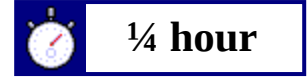


2.2 Managing Stressful Feelings & Reactions

Managing our feelings during a disaster warning or disaster situation

2.3 Coping with a Real Threat or Severe Warning

Coping with our growing feelings during a disaster warning or disaster situation



2.4 Helping Others to Cope

How you can help the people around you cope with a natural disaster, including friends, family and neighbours.



Trainer's Instructions



¼ hour

Briefly show the “2.4 Helping Others to Cope” overhead slide (overhead #14).

In this sub-section the facilitator will:

- b Brainstorm with participants about how others may not be coping as well.
- b Ask the participants how others around them have acted during severe warning situations or disaster events.
- b Provide some useful tips for assisting others to cope “Tips to help others to cope with their feelings” handout (Handout #9) (content below) and discussing with the group.
- b Distribute “Self statements for dealing with anxiety and worry during a real threat or natural disaster warning” handout (Handout #10) (content on the next page) for the group to read.
- b Inform participants that we have covered the content of stage 1 and 2 and to take a break of around 15 minutes after which we will deal with stage 3.

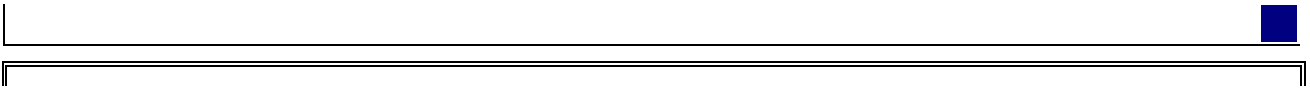


Notes

Tips to help others to cope with their feelings

- b Teach them the simple breathing exercises
- b Be sensitive to them, do not judge (they may be feeling scared, angry or ashamed if they are not coping as well as you appear to be)
- b Encourage them to take responsibility for a task that needs attending to
- b Encourage them to listen to the emergency advice with you
- b Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling with you
- b Get people involved in occupying their time rather than worrying

Reser and Morrissey used the content in Handout #10 in the form of a fridge magnet. Their research reported that people found this to be very helpful during the severe warning situation of Cyclone Justin.





3 Coping During the Natural Disaster or Warning Event

3.1 Checking how we coped

3.2 Can I be better prepared next time?

3.3 Taking stock – coping with losses and damage

- b Increase awareness about evaluating (assessing the effectiveness of) the psychological preparedness in the face of an impending disaster or severe warning.
 - b Increase individual's awareness of strategies that seemed to help.
 - b Increase awareness of how psychological preparedness can be improved next time.
 - b Provide some information about where individuals can go for help after the event should this be required.
-
- b Gain feedback from the group how they coped and whether they had any difficulties managing their feelings
 - b Brainstorm with the group what could be done to improve preparation next time.
-
- b Advise the group of the existence of organisations available to assist with a range of post disaster interventions.
 - b Reinforce the importance of individuals and communities to ***anticipate, identify and manage***

3.1 Checking How we Coped

Did we do OK? How you and I coped with the events and what worked.



½ hour

3.2 Can We Be Better Prepared Next Time?

What we could do next time to better prepare ourselves, and our community, both psychologically and materially for a natural disaster warning or event.



Trainer's Instructions



¼ hour

3.3 Coping with Losses and Damage – Taking Stock

Communities may need to work together to restore services after a natural disaster and individuals need to know that it's OK to ask for help.



Trainer's Instructions



¼ hour

Briefly show the “3.3 Coping with Losses and Damage – Taking Stock” overhead slide (overhead #17).

In this sub-section the facilitator will:

- b Briefly advise that this workshop or program is not designed to deal with post disaster trauma (stress) or losses, such a workshop could go for days, however a list of counsellors and/or agencies that can assist after a disaster is provided.
- b Handout the list of organisations available to assist with a range of post disaster interventions and read out the “facilitator note”.

It is inevitable in disaster prone areas that some loss or damage will occur, and that the whole point of the psychological preparedness kit is to alert the community about possible psychological processes that may hinder good material preparation.

In most areas of Australia special teams of counsellors and psychologists are available for a range of post disaster interventions (including general counselling, grief counselling, ‘Critical Incident Stress Debriefing’). In some areas whole teams are available to come into disaster prone areas to assist with coping with material damages and loss and emotional distress. Emotional distress following disaster can include anger anxiety, sadness, and/or grief. Again the ability for individuals and communities to **anticipate, identify and manage** these feelings is the key.

- b Encourage participants, in general conversation with the group, to talk through the unfairness of natural disasters, and to share their experiences with the effects of natural disaster. On conclusion of this general discussion facilitators should read out the “facilitator note” directly below.

Ultimately, the nature of natural disaster is that they will impact on people's lives from time-to-time and very often, it would seem, unfairly and without mercy.

“Communities may need to work together to restore services and individuals need to know that it's OK to ask for help”.

- b Handout the program evaluation sheet for completion by participants.

Summary



Trainer's Instructions



5 minutes

- b Handout out the “Names Of People I Can Call On During A Disaster Situation” list to complete at home (Handout #11).
- b Handout out the “Names Of People I Need To Account For During A Disaster Situation” list to complete at home (Handout #12).
- b Handout out the “Preparedness Checklist” list to complete at home (Handout #13).

Facilitators will conclude by reading the paragraphs in ‘facilitator note’, thanking all that have attended, and encouraging participants to facilitate similar and additional workshops to ‘on-train’ the general community, in so doing increasing individuals and their communities general preparedness for natural disaster warnings and natural disaster events.

This disaster preparation workshop and kit has attempted to familiarise you

