



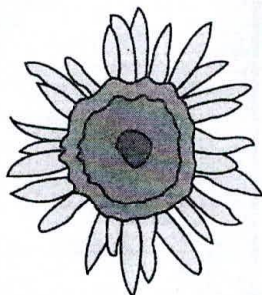
Resume Family Routines



Relaxation & Meditation



Share Feelings



You can help yourself



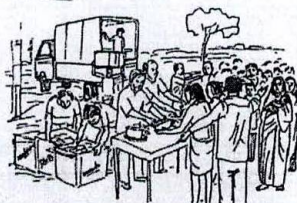
Initiate Rituals



Restart Activities



Initiate Rehabilitation



Participate in Relief

RECOVERY MECHANISMS

Symptoms start decreasing in most people in a few weeks when they initiate some actions to reorganise and rebuild themselves. After a few weeks/months, even though the memories of the disaster remain, they do not stop you from going ahead with your life.



HOW CAN YOU RECOVER?

To promote recovery we suggest the following to be done:

At a Personal Level:

- ✓ Listen to **authentic information** about the supercyclone.
- ✗ Do **not** believe in rumours that go around during such times.
- ✓ Be **together** with family members.
- ✗ Do **not** send women, children and the aged to far off places for the sake of safety as this separation can cause a lot of anxiety to them and you.
- ✓ Be **with** people from the same village, i.e. people you are familiar with, even if you are in temporary dwellings.
- ✓ Get **back to a daily routine** as soon as possible to make you feel that you are in control of the situation.
- ✓ Make it a point to **talk about the supercyclone, share your experiences and feelings** with your family, your parents, friends, spouse, siblings, acquaintances. This will help ventilate/release your emotions.
- ✓ **Restart** activities that are special to your family like having meals together, praying, playing games, singing, etc.
- ✓ **Keep touching and comforting** your parents, children, spouse and the aged in your family. This will not only make you feel good but also make the other person feel the same.
- ✓ **Initiate and participate** in rituals like collective grieving, prayer meetings or group mournings if you have lost a near and dear one. This will help you come to terms with the loss of the person.

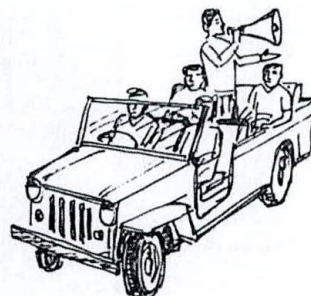


- ✓ **Take part in rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations** if you are not hurt or only slightly injured. Work is a good tonic for healing.
- ✓ **Keep in constant touch** in case of a member of the family having to be shifted to a far off hospital or residence. Update him/her about yourself as well as find out about him/herself. This gives a feeling of being cared for.
- ✓ **Take time everyday to relax and have a good time** by gathering together at a central place/point, playing kabbadi, reading, listening to music, visiting shrines, singing hymns, chanting prayers, reading scriptures.
- ✓ **Make time for yourself** and acknowledge and admit that you will not be always functioning at your usual level of efficiency for a few weeks/months.

At the Community level:

Immediate

- ✓ **Disseminate authentic information** about the disaster and the help available either by going around personally or using loudspeakers or posters/placards.
- ✓ **Organise groups for rescue operations.** Help to remove debris, shift people to a safe place, help the disabled, and share food, water and medicines. **Identify groups** for each activity and a leader for each group. The whole village should be involved in planning rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations.



- ✓ **Listen to and encourage** other people talking about the disaster, etc.
- ✓ **Encourage** the group to focus on the special groups like the children, women, disabled and elderly.
- ✓ **Organise** people to present their needs and difficulties to the administrators in a collective manner.
- ✓ **Bring together** people of the community for sharing of grief/community mourning.
- ✓ **Organise self help groups** to procure aid and to discuss emotions associated with the disaster. Self-help groups should have people with similar needs. For example, people who have lost family members could join together to grieve and later work on it.



- ✓ **Organise weekly meetings to share information and sing together.**
- ✓ **Prepare yourself for delays and difficulties.**

In Future

- ✓ **Seek information** about help extended and organise groups to represent your village to seek help/aid.
- ✓ **Actively mobilise action** for reconstruction and rehabilitation work. Take care that this includes all aspects of a community to be disaster proof, where agriculture, electricity, health care, education, etc. are concerned.
- ✓ **Continue dialoguing** with government officials and NGOs for a persistent effort on relief and rehabilitation.

SPECIAL GROUPS

Children, women, old people and the disabled are special groups of people who need special attention. Let us first talk about children.

YOUNG CHILDREN

The child's mind and emotional state are not yet developed enough to solve problems as an adult. A child needs to discuss and sort out his/her fears with an adult because he/she probably does not realise there are other options. He/she becomes dependent on adults physically and emotionally. Often the child cannot comprehend the consequences of any disaster – leave alone even this supercyclone. There is a sense of losing his/her identity. However, events that take place during a disaster, like darkness, loud noises, commotion, loss of shelter, separation from caring persons like mother, father and siblings, deprivation of food, and drink, experiencing the cold, and so on, do impact the child much more than it would an adult.

■ Very young pre-school children react by:

- Crying
- Clinging to adults, especially known people.

Later, often they are known to:

- Cry and excessively cling on to some family member due to the fear of once again losing whatever security they have.
- Become listless and apathetic, especially if they do not get warmth and a feeling of security from the surviving adults.
- Have disturbed sleep and unhealthy feeding problems.
- Behave like a smaller child much younger than his/her age. For example, a child of three years may stop talking and may insist on being carried and fed like a one-year-old child or an eight-year-old and restart wetting the bed at night.



SCHOOL GOING OLDER CHILDREN

Following are the experiences these children can show:

- Have nightmares or talk about the cyclone repeatedly. They are unable to get a sense of control over what has happened.
- Regress and develop bed-wetting or thumb sucking.
- Refuse to go to school or even separate for a short while from the remaining family members for fear of losing them.

- Decline in scholastic performance due to preoccupation with and reliving constantly the disaster scenes.
- Physical symptoms like abdominal pain, headache, movements of the body, which is one way of communicating distress.
- Feel responsible for the death of the near and dear one(s) and become depressed and withdrawn, with reduced sleep and appetite.
- Disturbed and angry over what has happened and retaliate with difficult behaviour, like irritability, quarrels, lying, disobedience and at times stealing.

Sumitra, a 9-year-old impish girl, after the cyclone seems to be coping well – doing her routine, going to school and helping other children in the family. However, her interest in studies has suddenly decreased. She no longer shows interest in doing her homework given by the teacher. The teacher thought it was natural, with the children having gone through a lot. To her surprise, Sumitra continued to be disinterested in studies after many months and later dropped out of school, though her father was keen to send her to school as he felt she was very intelligent. But nobody realised that Sumitra's friend in class, Sarada had been washed away in the cyclone along with her family. Sumitra used to compete with her for the first position.

How to help

Often the child does not understand why he/she behaves in a particular manner and cannot articulate the reasons for the behaviour clearly. It is necessary for the parents/adults to understand these changes and take certain measures to help the child get over the stress. The goal is to improve the feeling of security and bonding between them.

- Leaving children with known adults, i.e. mother, siblings, known neighbours.
- Re-establishing at the earliest possible a routine like eating, playing, studying, sleeping, etc.
- Actions that are security-giving
 - Touching, hugging the child often
 - Reassuring them verbally.
 - If possible giving a favourite toy, or piece of cloth (mother's sari) which the child had used earlier as a soother.
 - Keeping a small light on while the child is sleeping.
- Activities which will provide a sense of control over the disaster.
 - Allowing the children to talk about the incident and listening without advising.



- Encouraging play activities which are related to the incident. For example, Children can make paper boats and put them in water. The boats may be rocked, creating a turbulence in the water. The difficulties of people in the boat can be discussed.
 - Story telling, singing songs pertaining to the cyclone.
 - Giving attention to and approving of the child's coping behaviour, e.g., praising him/her for going back to school and following a routine, etc. Routine also gives a sense of control over oneself.
- Liaisoning with the teacher to also help in the recovery of the child.
 - Paying more attention and spending more time with them on their studies.



AGED PEOPLE

Aged people like children may not be in total control of situations. This makes them also very vulnerable to the trauma. They take a longer time and more effort to recover with the disaster.

When faced with the death of many young people, the aged can become very depressed. They may:

- Withdraw, cry and groan repeatedly, for many months.
- Suffer from sleeplessness and refuse food.
- Be agitated, feel hopeless and have suicidal tendencies
- Fall ill as psychologically they are affected and their resistance is low and are susceptible to all types of illness.



Binay Panda's (aged 64) only companion was his ailing wife who was bed-ridden since the last few years. She died when their hut came down in the cyclone. Others thought that her death was a blessing in disguise to Panda; he also felt so. However, over the following weeks, Binay was found to be apathetic, confused and complaining of memory loss. People thought that it was due to his advanced age. But it was, one health worker who realised that Binay was mourning his wife's death in this manner.

How to help

- Keep them with the near and dear ones as much as possible.
- Convey to them positive news without fail and repeatedly.
- Touch them and allow them to cry.
- Re-establish their daily routine.
- Give them responsibility which they can carry out without much difficulty, like for e.g, take care of children for short periods, distribute food for a small number of people, etc.
- Consult them in relief activities.

(Note: the above two give them a feeling of control over the situation.)

- Attend to them with immediate medical attention when necessary.
- Conduct prayers in small and large groups, focussing on religious matters.



WOMEN

Women feel more vulnerable than men in disaster situations. The poor physical condition of an average Indian woman and the oppressive social conditions in a patriarchal society are some of the reasons for this. Women are more emotional than men and a supercyclone causing such a magnitude of human suffering affects them significantly. However, women also respond to stress differently from men, which can be manifested in:

- λ Exhibiting more emotional symptoms like weeping and later on becoming depressed.
- λ Exhibiting symptoms like 'fainting'.
- λ Experiencing physical symptoms like aches and pains, weakness as a response to conflict.
- λ Showing more 'resilience' than the other group to care for the young.



Among them, more affected are women who are young, single, widowed, orphaned, disabled, have lost children, etc. Specific attention has to be given to the affected women during and following a disaster, like:

Helping women help themselves

- λ Similar to the aged and children, women should stay together in nearby safe places rather than move to faraway places.
- λ Obtain information about the safety of family members especially spouses, offsprings, siblings and parents.
- λ Involve actively in routine activities of the family pertaining to caring of the young, old, sick members of the family, etc.
- λ Involve in community level activities, which are familiar, like preparing food, caring of the sick.
- λ Involve actively in relief activities of social relevance, like maintenance of cleanliness of the surroundings, etc.
- λ Form self-help groups among yourselves to deal with, share the loss, and suffering, and participate in the rehabilitation activities.



- Create private physical spaces for yourself and other women for bathing, changing clothes, etc.
- Mobilise resources to help other affected women in innovative ways like asking women who have lost children to adopt orphaned children, suggesting widowed women to start a new life.
- Spend time in singing and other activities that give you happiness.



DISABLED PEOPLE

People who are disabled like the visually impaired, hearing impaired, orthopaedically handicapped, mentally ill and mentally handicapped are also affected by the cyclone. The disability often may stretch their recovery skills. In the face of disasters like the supercyclone, they need assistance from others to adjust and recover, without which they can become quite ill.



Amit, is a 40-year-old visually impaired person, who has so far been totally independent, able to walk freely within the village and to his job as a music teacher. During the cyclone, Amit was totally helpless as he did not know where and how to reach a place of safety. He could not even help his elderly father to a place of safety.

This is to be remembered and recognised.

How to help the disabled

- Explain to and update them of the situation. This gives a feeling of being involved and not ignored.
- Remove them to any place of safety where they can recover.
- Focus on specific tasks which they can perform within the limitations of their handicap. Focus on what they can do.
- It is better to have groups comprising differently abled people and some people without disabilities.

RECAP

- Special groups like children, old people, women and disabled can react differently to the supercyclone.
- Their distress also starts decreasing after a few weeks.
- Specific efforts can help recovery.
- In some this may not happen and therefore need recognition and intervention.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN GIVING HELP/AID IN A DISASTER

Immediate (at the time of disaster):

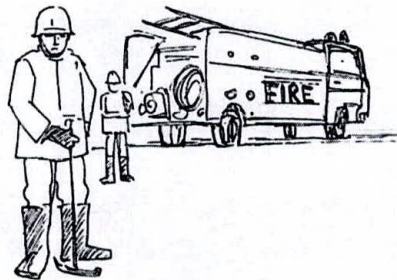
- Local administrative officers – District Commissioner, Tahsildar, Panchayat members, Block Development Officer.



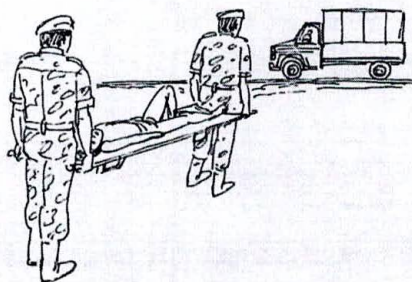
- Local health authorities: District Health Officers, Primary Health Doctors, Nurses, Health Workers, Anganwadi Workers, Mental Health Professionals.



- Fire brigade



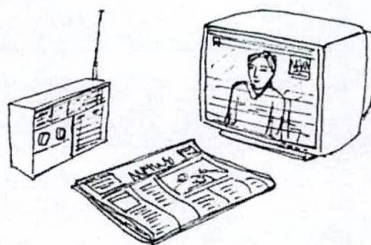
- Army



- Voluntary organisations



- Media



After the disaster

- Local Administrative Authorities
- Block Development Authorities
- Agricultural Officers
- Veterinary – Animal husbandry officials
- Public Works Department (PWD)
- Local Health Authorities
- District Education Authorities.

Suggestions while using this Document

- Translate into local language.
- Narrate stories and couplets in the local language while talking of recovery.
- Perform skits in the local language giving information about the disaster and also encouraging recovery.