



Tornado Toolkit

Support for you and your loved ones during tornado recovery.

We are Here to Help.

Mental health and wellbeing resources to help you stay balanced during an emotionally challenging time.



General Information

- A tornado WATCH means conditions favor the development of a tornado. You do not need to take shelter immediately, but you should be prepared to take shelter.
- A tornado WARNING means that a tornado has been spotted. Take shelter immediately if you are in an area under a tornado warning.
- Tornado intensities are classified on the Fujita Scale with ratings between F0 (weakest) to F5 (strongest).

What To Do Before

- Have a shelter in place plan where you have identified where the safest place in your house is to shelter and what quick things you will need to do in the room to make it safer (e.g., cover mirrors, remove heavy items from walls).
- Plan for your kids and pets. They will have different needs and understand what is happening differently than you. Make sure you know how to get everyone together quickly in your shelter, and have what they need in your emergency kit.
- Make a communication plan for your family and close friends, so you have contact information easily at hand in case you are not together during the tornado.
- Pick a safe, easy to access place to meet after a tornado in case you are not together, and the phone lines/cell towers go down or are overloaded.
- Understand how your local area communicates critical tornado information, and have a radio available in case cell towers and/or electricity become unreliable.
- Assemble an emergency kit that includes 2-3 days of water, food, medications, radio, flashlights, batteries, pet supplies, cash, and safety gear.



What To Do During

- Take shelter immediately in your pre-planned shelter if you are home. If you are in a public place, ask management what their plan is. If you are outdoors, follow the tips that can be found below.
- If you have functional needs and are unable to move from a bed or chair and assistance is not available, protect yourself from falling objects by covering up with blankets, pillows, or anything soft and protective.
- Take protective measures. Wear sturdy shoes, stay away from heavy, potentially unstable items, protect your head if the tornado hits your location.
- If you smell gas or see smoke, open a window, and get everyone out as quickly as you can. Find a safe place.
- Pay attention to pets and family members.
- Stay informed with tornado updates.
- Stay calm and practice self-care techniques.

Mobile Home

- If you live in a mobile home, it's important to leave and find shelter elsewhere if you have time and warning to do so (tornado watch is a good time to do this).
- If no shelter is immediately available, leave your mobile home and use the following instructions for outdoors.

Outdoors

- If you are in a vehicle, do not try to outrun a tornado. If you are in a tornado watch, you can drive to the closest known shelter. If you are in an active tornado area, then park your car, get down in your vehicle and cover your head and neck, or leave the vehicle and seek shelter in a low-lying area such as a ditch.
- You **MUST** stay away from highway overpasses, bridges, trees, electrical poles, outside walls. Low-lying open areas are the best areas.



What To Do After

- Evaluate for injuries.
- Evaluate the safety of your home—walk through all rooms and determine if it is safe and what needs to be cleaned up immediately. Evacuate immediately and call 911 if it is unsafe (a fire hazard, smell gas, etc.)
- Evaluate the safety of your surrounding area—scan your yard for fallen trees or fallen power lines. Call the utility company if there is a fallen power line.
- Turn water and power off if your house was substantially damaged. (Do not turn on or off if you are standing in water).
- Determine what next steps need to be taken for non-emergency clean-up and any insurance steps that need to be taken if your house, car, or land were impacted.
- Keep family routines as regularly as possible, seek additional help and support as needed, and look through natural disaster and trauma resources.



National Weather Service
[What to Do After a Tornado](#)

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
[Stay Safe After a Tornado](#)

Insurance Information Institute
[Tornados and Insurance](#)



Friends & Family Can Help After a Traumatic Event

Help Them Support You

Your friends and family can offer you support after experiencing a traumatic event. They will be very concerned about you, and you can help them support you by letting them know how you are feeling. Even though they care, they didn't experience the trauma with you. It's okay to remind them about your experience and ask them to be patient as you recover. This will help them help you. Share this toolkit with them so they know what to expect and how they can offer support as you need it.

Explain Your Feelings

Tell your friends and family you have gone through a traumatic experience. Let them know that you will need their support and understanding to cope and recover, and that it may be weeks, or even months, before the effects of this experience have diminished. Also let them know you may be experiencing some of the following feelings and behaviors:

- Increased anxiety or fear
- Short temper or irritability
- Nightmares and sleep problems
- Confusion and/or short term memory loss
- Difficulty making decisions
- Fear of being alone
- Physical aches and pains
- Tendency to withdraw

Tell Friends & Family How They Can Help

"I might be feeling or acting differently for a while. Here are some ways you can help when I'm struggling:"

- Be patient - don't just tell me to think positive
- Listen and try to understand my feelings
- Ask how you can help
- Temporarily take over some of my responsibilities
- Help me feel safe again: *(Drive me to work, help me feel safe by installing new safety precautions at home such as door locks, run errands with me, or just spend some extra time with me.)*

A traumatic event can trigger memories of other unrelated traumas, such as an illness, injury, or the past death of a loved one. If you are having other traumatic memories, tell someone. Your friends and family can only help if they know what you are dealing with. So if your feelings or behaviors are changing or getting worse, let someone know so they can support your needs.

If you don't feel comfortable talking to your friends and family, or if you need more help than they can offer, you should **reach out to professionals by calling the EAP.**

21 Things You Can Do While You're Living Through a Traumatic Experience

1. Take immediate action to ensure your safety and the safety of others. If it's possible, remove yourself from the event/scene in order to avoid further traumatic exposure.
2. Address your acute medical needs (e.g., If you're having difficulty breathing, experiencing chest pains or palpitations, seek immediate medical attention).
3. Find a safe place that offers shelter, water, food, and sanitation.
4. Become aware of how the event is affecting you (i.e., your feelings, thoughts, actions, and your physical and spiritual reactions).
5. Know that your reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event. You are not "losing it" or "going crazy."
6. Speak with your physician or healthcare provider and make him/her aware of what has happened to you.
7. Be aware of how you're holding-up when there are children around you. Children will take their cues from the adults around them.
8. Try to obtain information. Knowing the facts about what has happened will help you to keep functioning.
9. If possible, surround yourself with family and loved ones. Realize that the event could be affecting them, too.
10. Tell your story. And, allow yourself to feel. It's okay not to be okay during a traumatic experience.
11. You may experience a desire to withdraw and isolate, causing a strain on significant others. Resist the urge to shut down and retreat into your own world.
12. Traumatic stress may compromise your ability to think clearly. If you find it difficult to concentrate when someone is speaking to you, focus on the specific words they are saying and work to actively listen. Slow down the conversation and try repeating what you have just heard.
13. Don't make important decisions when you're feeling overwhelmed. Allow trusted family members or friends to assist you with necessary decision-making.
14. If stress is causing you to react physically, use controlled breathing techniques to stabilize yourself. Take a slow deep breath by inhaling through your nose, hold your breath for 5 seconds and then exhale through your mouth. Upon exhalation, think the words "relax," "let go," or "I'm handling this." Repeat this process several times.
15. Realize that repetitive thinking and sleep difficulties are normal reactions. Don't fight the sleep difficulty. Try the following: Eliminate caffeine 4 hours prior to your bedtime, create the best sleep environment you can, consider taking a few moments before turning out the lights to write down your thoughts thus emptying your mind.
16. Give yourself permission to rest, relax, and engage in non-threatening activity. Read, listen to music, consider taking a warm bath, etc.
17. Physical exercise may help to dissipate the stress energy that has been generated by your experience. Take a walk, ride a bike, or swim.
18. Create a journal. Writing about your experience may help to expose yourself to painful thoughts and feelings and, ultimately, enable you to assimilate your experience.
19. If you find that your experience is too powerful, allow yourself the advantage of professional and/or spiritual guidance, support, and education.
20. Try to maintain your schedule. Traumatic events will disrupt the sense of normalcy. We are all creatures of habit. By maintaining our routines, we can maintain a sense of control at a time when circumstances may lead us to feel a loss of control.
21. Crises present opportunities. Cultivate a mission and purpose. Seize the energy from your experience and use it to propel you to set realistic goals, make decisions, and take action.

Source: American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress



General Tornado Resources

CDC's Stay Safe During a Tornado

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/during.html>

Ready.gov Tornado Information

<https://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>

National Weather Service Tornado Safety

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado>

CDC's Health and Safety Concerns for All Disasters

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/alldisasters.html>

American Red Cross Tornado Safety

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/tornado.html>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Tornado Resources

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/disasters/tornado-resources>

Radio Station Locator

<https://radio-locator.com>

National Weather Service What to Do After a Tornado

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado-after>

National Weather Service Tornado Survivor Stories

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado-survivors>

International Association of Certified Home Inspector's House Inspection Information

<https://www.nachi.org/emergency-inspector-help.htm>

Insurance Information Institute Tornadoes and Insurance

<https://www.iii.org/article/tornadoes-and-insurance>



We Are Here to Help

EAP benefits are available to all employees and their families at NO COST to you. The EAP offers confidential advice, support, and practical solutions to help you through your grief and loss. You can access these confidential services by calling the toll-free number below and speaking with our care team or accessing online.

Short-Term Counseling

For a deeper level of support, members can request short-term counseling by calling Uprise Health. Our nationwide provider network of more than 60,000 counselors can be filtered by criteria including geography, clinical specialty, cultural background, and other preferences, to ensure a perfect fit for you. After speaking with our care team, you will be provided with a list of providers. You can schedule an appointment yourself or ask the care team for assistance scheduling.

24-hour Crisis Support

During business hours, members who are in crisis are connected with an Uprise Health clinician who will stabilize your situation and refer you to appropriate support. After-hours calls are answered by behavioral health professionals located within the U.S. If you are in life threatening situation, please call 9-1-1 as you would do for any other medical/life emergency.

Online Peer Support Groups

As part of your EAP program, you can request up to 10 online peer support groups where you will have a safe and confidential place to speak with others who have similar issues. Please call Uprise Health and speak with our care team to learn more about the Grief and Loss support group.



Contact Uprise Health

Call: 1-800-395-1616

Visit: members.uprisehealth.com