

## Lessons from Katrina

By Marcia Eager, CEAP

Four years ago this country experienced a disaster unknown to America. Recently we experienced another disaster whose sheer destruction was unknown to America. Across the United States we are all vulnerable to natural disasters of one kind or another. What can we learn about taking care of ourselves, our families, and our communities as a result of these events?

1. Understand that previous traumas may impact you now. Especially when new traumas happen close to the anniversary date of the previous trauma. This is a normal response. Do something to acknowledge the anniversary. Acknowledging your feelings is an important and helpful process in healing.
2. Depending on where you live you may be at risk to experience a hurricane, tornados, earthquakes or other natural disasters. Before the disaster occurs formulate and prepare an action plan. Have sufficient supplies to survive for 3-5 days. If you are told to evacuate do so, the experts have more information than you do. Protect your house as best as you can and leave. Educate yourself about a number of escape routes, so you will not get stuck and be unable to leave. Know where the shelters are located in case you need to access them. Have a way of communicating with other family members. Plan for your pets, if you are going to a



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### What can we learn about taking care of ourselves, our families and our communities?

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3. Get involved in some way. Donating money to a legitimate program is always appropriate. Sometimes we need to do more. A way to help with the anxiety brought up by the event is to do something physically. For instance, food banks may need help in sorting food at donation centers. Other agency's are collecting other items and need help sorting. Churches may have special programs and need support to run those programs. You may want to open your home to some-

one displaced.

4. You may have an expertise in a particular area and want to volunteer. Check with the appropriate agency to see if they need your specialty now or later. Make sure you clear this with your employer.
5. Take care of your family. If you have young children they need to be cared for emotionally as well as physically. They may ask if something like Katrina could happen to them. They have questions about their safety and what would happen if a hurricane hit their home. You can't say it will never happen, but you can say that is why you are preparing a plan. Including them in the plan is helpful, practicing evacuation procedures also helps them feel safer.
6. Check with your local government to learn what the disaster plan is for your community. Educating yourself about the plan will make the process smoother for you and your family. It also helps to reassure you that some thought has gone into the planning.
7. Try to maintain as much of your normal routine as possible. This will also help to provide structure in a time of possible

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Call the EAP for *free & confidential* counseling and referral. Family members are welcome.

**1-800-526-3485**

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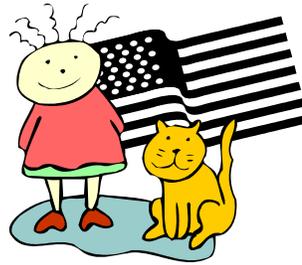
Solutions EAP is a program of Middlesex Hospital and Behavioral Health Connecticut, LLC.

**Solutions**  
FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE



# Helping Kids Cope with Crisis

To assist children in coping with severe stress associated with the September 11<sup>th</sup> incident, one national child development expert, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, recommends the following:



1. **Listen to your** child and discuss his or her fears. Help children believe that they are safe and so are those who take care of them.
2. **Tell children a** bit of the truth in simple terms, depending on the child's age. Don't share more than asked for. Some facts reduce fear by preventing a child's worst fears from filling in the gaps.
3. **Maintain a normal** routine as much as possible. Routines are important. They reassure your child that things are under control.
4. **Set limits on** exposure to TV images that can be traumatizing.
5. **Resist stereotyping** or labeling other cultures, peoples, and religions. Help children understand that not all people in a given culture act in evil ways.
6. **Children watch and** listen for adults' reactions to the traumatic events. How you respond and handle your anger and fears in front of your child will impact their mental well-being. Be cautious about exposing children to strongly worded adult conversations.
7. **Take care of** yourself. Attempt to live a normal life.

Source: PR Newswire

## Katrina Lessons—continued

chaos. This is also another reason to develop a family plan in the case of a disaster.

8. Communication may be a problem in a time of crisis. When the World Trade Center was destroyed the communication network was not in working order. Your cell phones may not work, so planning another way to communicate is important. This is a time when rumors are rampant. Try to discard stories that begin with "I heard...". When you are aware of the community disaster plan you will know where to go to get the appropriate information.
9. Helping each other in times of disaster provides support and encouragement. This not a time to go it alone. People show great courage in times of crisis and become the leaders. Others become followers and banding together brings out the best in all of us. Small acts of courage get the job done and that happens when we stand up and do the right thing.
10. Our web site ([www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)) has other information regarding responses in times of crisis. Please access that information or call us at 1-800-526-3485 if you need someone to talk to.

# EAP???

What happens when I call EAP?

Call between 8:00 and 4:30, Monday—Friday to make an appointment. After these hours you will reach our hotline crisis service. During business hours, our EAP team member will ask you where you live and work so we can determine the best location for you to see an EAP Counselor. We don't ask for any information about your personal issue, so calling EAP is as easy as calling your doctor or dentist. In some cases, when you can go to one of our staff counseling offices, we will schedule your appointment at the first call.

If it is more convenient for you to see one of our EAP Counselors in our network (many locations are available) we will give you the name and number of the counselor and you will schedule your appointment directly with him or her. You may reach their voicemail, so leave a good time to be reached. We will call them also to alert them of your call. They should call you back promptly, usually the same day or within 24 hours, and initial appointments should be made within a few days. If you do not hear back from them or get an appointment within this time frame, call us back and we will give you another name.

Remember, your entire EAP experience is confidential.

## Your Team's MISSION



If teamwork, less conflict, and high-level customer service are important to you, think about producing a mini-mission statement for your work group. Although there may already be an organization-wide mission statement, smaller work units can increase their focus on what counts with a mini-mission statement. Here's how: (1) Decide who your customers are and what they really want; (2) recall positive and negative comments heard throughout the year; (3) identify the underlying values and needs behind these comments; (4) turn #3 into a mission statement. For added impact and group commitment, frame the statement and place it where others can see it.