

SPECIAL CONCERNS OF OLDER ADULTS FOLLOWING A DISASTER¹

Each age group is vulnerable in unique ways to the stresses of a disaster. Different issues and concerns become relevant during the emotional recovery.

In older adults some disaster stress reactions may be experienced immediately, while others may appear months later.

Many who survive a disaster experience a strong desire to withdraw from others. They may withdraw even from those to whom they are the closest. Overcoming the tendency to isolate ones self takes real strength and discipline. A few ways to break the isolation barrier are to:

- **TALK:** It takes courage to reveal what you are thinking and feeling to someone else. Talking can be very comforting and healing. Talking is worth it.
- **ASK FOR HELP:** Research shows that people who ask for help come through disasters stronger and healthier than those who view seeking help as a weakness.
- **BE WITH PEOPLE:** Life does not return to normal overnight. You have survived a disaster. That doesn't mean your life is over or that you don't deserve to be happy again. Do something good for yourself. Now is the time to do it!

¹ Adapted from <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac/resources.asp#grantee>