

Seeking Help

The amount and kind of stress and trauma that individuals experience in a disaster varies from person to person. Often, some survivors may be vulnerable to adopting or resuming unhealthy coping strategies following a disaster. Some may begin to abuse substances, including alcohol, resume abusing when there was a prior period of abstinence or recovery, or engage in addictive behaviors because they are simply overwhelmed.



Local substance abuse providers can be found at www.linkingcare.org along with helpful tips, guides and assistance.

Local 12 step recovery programs can help as well. To connect with support & meetings near you, go to www.na.org for **Narcotics Anonymous** or www.aa.org for **Alcoholics Anonymous**.

The Division of Behavioral Health can provide guidance and recommendations for local support as well, at 303-866-7501.



**Colorado Department of
Human Services**

Division of Behavioral Health
3824 W. Princeton Circle
Denver, CO 80236
Main Number: 303-8667400
Disaster Response Coordinator:
303-866-7501



**Alcohol and
Substance Use
and Abuse
During a Disaster**

Alcohol and Drug Use in Times of Crisis

Everyone reacts differently to trauma and disasters. The emotional impact of these events can increase stress and decrease our healthy coping strategies.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, a significant increase in the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana was seen in people who were using these substances prior to the disaster. Six months later, people were still using at this higher rate. This kind of level of use increase can cause other problems in daily living.

Stress-induced Relapse

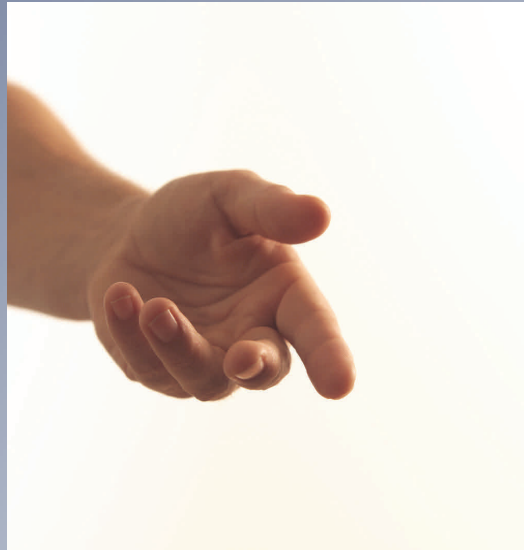
The stress and trauma that people experience following a major disaster, whether it is a natural event or a man-made event, will vary from person to person. Many people may begin or resume substance abuse because of their experiences. Some have had long periods of abstinence, but stress is a very powerful trigger for relapse.

If alcohol or drug use is an issue for you or your loved ones during times of stress, it's important to pay close attention to how you or they are coping. When you are in recovery, stress can be the number one cause of relapse to drug and alcohol use.

Staying Clean and Sober

For some problem drinkers and drug users in recovery, disaster often makes it difficult to remain sober. If you have a history of alcohol or drug dependence, or if you think you would be better off avoiding the temptation, remember the old adage,

"Stay away from the people, places and things that you associate with drinking and drugging."



"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle" ~ Plato

Warning Signs

If you are unsure if you or someone you know is having difficulties with substance use, ask if you or the person you know are:

- Drinking more than normal?
- Using drugs or alcohol to deal with overwhelming feelings of loss and grief?
- Using drugs or alcohol to numb the pain?
- Having difficulty caring for yourself or family members?
- Experiencing deterioration in relationships with family or friends?
- Experiencing decline in your appearance and cleanliness?
- Having problems attending school or work?
- Hiding the amount of alcohol or drugs that you use?
- Experiencing an increase in problems often associated with substance use, like...
 - Family violence?
 - Missing work?
 - Excessive spending?

If any of these situations happen to you following a disaster, it's important to seek some help.