

For further assistance phone the Citizens Advice Bureau on (03) 3666490. Also see the Personal Help Services section in the front of the phone book.

Pamphlets Available in This Series

Understanding ...

Anger
Bereavement
Conflict
Decision Making
Depression
Loneliness and Friendship
Self-Esteem
Stress

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Community Health Information Centre
Community & Public Health
(A Division of the Canterbury District Health Board)

76 Chester Street East, Christchurch
6B Sefton Street, Timaru
Elizabeth Street, Ashburton
3 Tarapuhi Street, Greymouth
Hauora Mātauraka, 242 Manchester Street, Christchurch

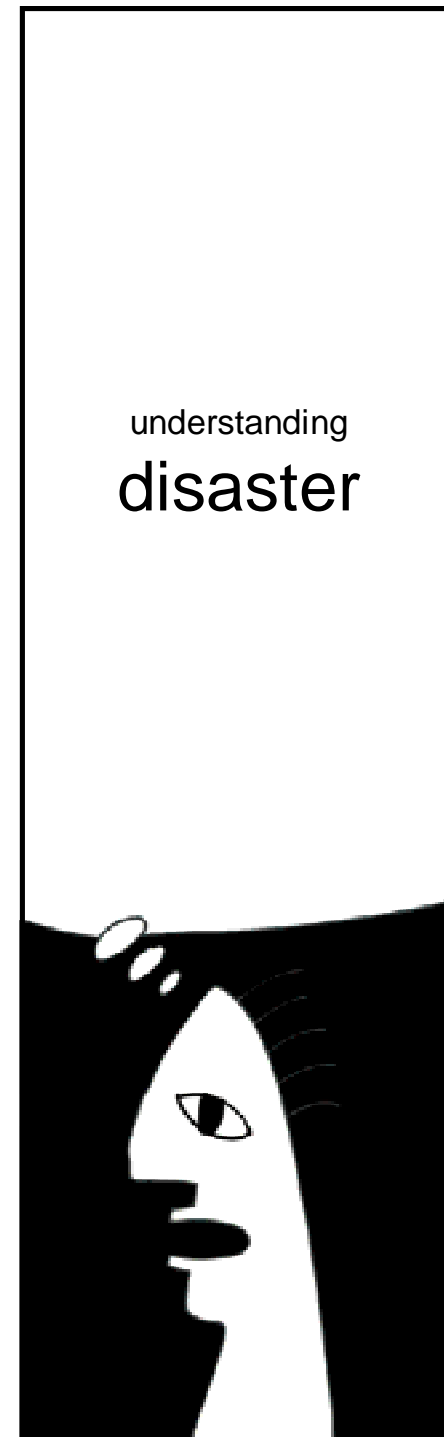
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understanding
disaster



Understanding Disaster

Some Psychological Aspects

Disasters are overwhelming experiences.

People are often helpless.

Usually there is:

death
disruption
loss of property

Likely Effects

Immediate - hours/days

dazed
apathy
unresponsiveness
indecision
mute

Later - days/weeks

Normal life may have resumed but people may be experiencing:

grief
helplessness
anger
resentment

This may be directed at:

helpers
rescuers
authorities

Delayed - weeks/months

irritability
excessive fearfulness
fatigue
low spirits
anxiety
difficulty with eating
difficulty with sleeping

Remember ...

- accept people's rights to their own feelings
- let people know that you may be able to understand how they feel
- size up their capabilities
- accept your own limitations

What To Do

- be warmly interested; kind, not judgemental, not over-sympathetic
- a gesture, a few words may be enough
- be aware of your own exhaustion, fear, irritability

How To Help

- very few will panic, but this may spread so cope with panicky people AT ONCE
- foster companionship
- anxiety about family and friends will be a major concern
- provide clear, simple instructions
- providing assistance, eg a hot drink and rest, signifies being cared for
- listening helps people come to terms with loss
- encourage purposeful activity