

The following is designed to offer practical information and guidance in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is standing by to support you in a variety of ways – through referrals to local resources such as temporary housing, financial assistance, contractors, handymen, and more, to free and confidential counseling to assist with the psychological impacts you or your family members may experience. Your EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Stay Safe



- If you have been evacuated, it is important to not return home until local officials say it is safe. Avoid putting yourself in harm as you assess damage and begin the clean up process. If your property has sustained damage, do not enter it until a building inspector or other government authority has certified that it is safe.
- Floodwater can be contaminated with all sorts of dangerous matter. Follow CDC guidelines, which can be found at [Guidelines for Cleaning Safely After a Disaster](#)
- Never enter standing water to turn on or off your main breaker. Call an electrician.
- Tips on managing during a prolonged power outage can be found at [How to Survive a Prolonged Power Outage](#)

## Access Available Assistance

There are programs to assist with housing, food, and other assistance, including the following:

- Housing and rental support:
  - FEMA may be able to help with temporary shelter or reimburse hotel expenses. The fastest way to apply is through [DisasterAssistance.gov](#). You can also call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362.
  - Find open shelters at [Red Cross: Find Open Shelters](#)
- Food and clothing assistance:
  - Call 211 to connect with United Way or visit their websites for more info at <https://unitedwayga.org/>
  - Georgia Emergency Management - Hurricane Helene - <https://gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene>
- Cash Assistance Programs at [Georgia.gov](#)

## How Can I Help Those Affected by the Disaster?

- **Recognize that this is a challenging time.** Go easy on yourself and break things down into smaller parts.
- **Allow yourself to mourn the losses you have experienced.** You may feel angry, resentful, guilty, sad, or cycle through these feelings at various times. Things may never return to exactly how they were before.
- **Connect with others.** Talk to people who can relate to what you are going through or those you trust.

- **Ground yourself.** If you start to become overwhelmed, try deep breathing, stretching, or taking a break from a stressful activity.
- **Take care of yourself physically.** The way we treat our bodies impacts our moods and mental health. Avoid turning to alcohol and drugs for relief and try to eat healthy food and stay hydrated.
- **Get back to routines.** As much as you can, get yourself on a schedule to help regain a sense of control.
- **Celebrate successes.** Take a moment to recognize small victories and simple joys.
- **Recognize when to seek professional help.** If you are finding that distress related to the hurricane is impacting your ability to function, it is time to reach out for help. Contact your EAP at the phone number below to access no-cost counseling with a licensed mental health professional.

## Tips for Supporting Children

- **Validate feelings.** It is ok to feel sad, upset, angry, and stressed. These are all normal responses.
- **Limit access to coverage on the news and internet.** For young children, avoid this all together. Being saturated with information or only talking about the event for long periods of time can be unhealthy.
- **Reassure children that they are safe.** You can tell your child with confidence that they, you, and those that they love are safe now that the hurricane has passed.
- **Provide opportunities to listen.** If children want to talk about the event, be available. Make sure they don't feel like they are burdening you. At the same time, try not to pressure a child to talk.
- **Spend more time with younger children.** Children will want to feel a greater sense of connection. Offer comfort by being together and engaging in activities that make them feel loved.
- **Avoid intense displays of emotions.** It is ok for children to see adults sad or crying but becoming angry or violent can further frighten children.
- **Point out the good and encourage these activities.** Share acts of kindness in the community that have taken place. If your children want to do something, encourage sending thank you notes to people who helped or to individuals who may be struggling.
- **Model self-care.** Show them how people overcome times of adversity through eating well, getting good sleep and rest, exercising, taking deep breaths, talking about feelings, and being there for each other.

References and Resources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Coping Tips for Traumatic Events and Disasters - <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/coping-tips> and Tips for Talking with and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event - <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma12-4732.pdf>

 **CALLTOLL-FREE, 24/7:**  
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 **WEBSITE:**  
[www.USG.MyLifeExpert.com](http://www.USG.MyLifeExpert.com)  
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