

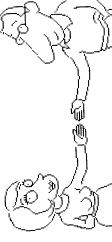




# Six Stages of Disaster Recovery

[rev. April 2007]

Phase	Time Frame of Phase	Emotions	Behaviors	Most Important Resources
 <b>Heroic</b>	Occurs at time of impact and period immediately afterward.	Altruism. All emotions are strong and direct at this time.	Heroic actions. Use of energy to save their own and others' lives and property.	Family groups, neighbors and emergency teams
	 <b>Tunnel Vision</b>	Overlaps with Heroic, Honeymoon and can extend well into the Disillusionment phase	Mostly detachment or emotional numbing. Strong feelings and intrusive memories tend to be temporarily minimized, denied or pushed aside	Very activity-focused. Continuing attention to taking care of daily tasks and more basic survival needs of self and loved ones
<b>Delayed Responses</b> <i>Any time post-trauma</i> <b>Emotions/memories intrude</b>				
 <b>Honeymoon</b>	From one week to three-six months after the disaster	Strong sense of having shared a catastrophic experience and lived through it; expectations of great assistance from official and government agencies	Victims clear out debris and wreckage buoyed by promises of great help in rebuilding their lives.	Pre-existing community groups and emergent community groups which develop from specific needs caused by disaster.
	 <b>Disillusionment</b>	Begins as early as 10 days and more commonly around the 3 <sup>rd</sup> week post-disaster or later. Phase closely associated with extent of losses and resources received—typically lasts from months up to two years or longer.	Strong sense of disappointment, anger, resentment and bitterness appear if there are delays, failures or unfulfilled hopes or promises of aid.	People concentrate on rebuilding their own lives and solving individual problems. The feeling of "shared community" is lost.
<b>Delayed Responses</b> <i>Any time post-trauma</i> <b>Emotions/memories intrude</b>				

<p><b>Reconstruction/ Recovery</b></p> 	<p>Lasts for several years following the disaster</p>	<p>Victims now realize that they need to solve the problems of rebuilding their lives. Visible recovery efforts serve to reaffirm belief in themselves and the community. If recovery efforts are delayed, emotional problems which appear may be serious and intense.</p>	<p>People have assumed the responsibility for their own recovery. New construction programs and plans reaffirm belief in capabilities and ability to recover.</p>	<p>Community groups with a long-term investment in the community and its people become key elements in this phase.</p>
<p><b>Delayed Responses</b>      Any time post-trauma</p>		<p><b>Emotions/memories intrude</b></p>		

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**Enhancement/Post-traumatic Growth.** This is an additional phase for some survivors. They are able to not only return to the level of functioning that existed prior to the trauma, but are able to “transform” their trauma experience and its aftermath in ways that result in newly discovered or enhanced awareness, growth and functioning. For example, there can be a re-ordering of priorities and discovery or re-affirmation of what is really important in their lives.

**Delayed Responses**      Any time post-trauma      **Emotions/memories intrude**

- **Tunnel Vision, Delayed and Enhancement/Post-traumatic Growth** phases, and adding “recovery” to “reconstruction,” are additions inserted by Ray Scurfield. The original chart had four stages (prepared by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service). The original four phases are credited to: N.L. Faberow & N.S. Gordon (1981), *Manual for Child Health Workers In Major Disasters*.
- The time-line for the *Disillusionment Phase* has been modified per input from Bruce Young, National Center for PTSD, Menlo Park, CA
- The devastation from Hurricane Katrina was so profound and widespread that the *time-lines* identified in this chart for one or more of the phases may be prolonged well beyond these general time-lines; all disasters are not equivalent in devastation or impact.
- All phases are not necessarily experienced in the order listed, nor do all trauma survivors necessarily experience all of the phases. For example: some people may never have a *Honeymoon Phase*; others may become “stuck” in and not get past the *Disillusionment Phase*.
- Hurricane Katrina survivors who did not *suffer a death* of a significant other may be experiencing a profound sense of loss and grief over the destruction of home and possessions, loss of place of employment, church, school, neighborhood, community--the loss of so much that was familiar and cherished along the entire MS Gulf Coast. For additional coping strategies to trauma, see Raymond Scurfield, “The Normal Abnormal,” *Psychology Today* (2002, January/February), p. 50
- Because of the actual or sense of loss and associated grief that occurs during and following disasters, a number of post-disaster and grief counselors have applied what is commonly known as the “five stages of grief” [by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, 1969, in her book, *On Death and Dying*] to be, in effect, five stages of coping with any traumatic event, whether or not death has been involved:
  - 1-*D denial*. “This is not happening to me.” “No, not to me” (or, no, not to someone close to you)
  - 2-*Anger*. “Why is this happening to me?” or “Why to my \_\_\_?”
  - 3-*Bargaining*. “Yes me, but . . .” (“If I do this, will you take away the loss . . .”)
  - 4-*Depression*. “Yes, me.” Feeling sad, angry and/or numb with the courage to admit that it is happening.
  - 5-*Acceptance*. The anger, sadness and mourning have tapered off and the person comes to accept the reality . . .
- However, it is my experience that the relevance of these stages of *grief* should be limited to traumatic loss issues and are not adequate to use as the model for understanding the common stages of *disaster recovery*. [In fact, the stages of grief were originally presented by Kubler-Ross as the five stages that terminally ill persons may go through upon *learning that they have a terminal illness* in order to be able to *then* actually move on to resolve their grief. See: TLC Group, Dallas, TX, Editorial, “Beware the 5 Stages of ‘Grief’”, @ 1997 by Counseling For Loss and Life Changes.

I welcome any feedback regarding the usefulness of this modified “common stages of disaster recovery” chart.  
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