

# WHAT DOESN'T HELP

When we're stressed and upset, the temptation to do things for comfort, like having a drink, having a smoke or eating foods that are bad for us, may seem like the answer.

Drinking alcohol to excess, using drugs, gambling, having endless cups of coffee or withdrawing from friends and family may make you feel worse.

**If you feel you or your child/children are not coping, make an appointment with your general practice team or phone the helpline 0800 777 846.**



For more information go to  
You Tube and search for  
"Understanding Responses To The  
Canterbury Earthquakes" to view the  
presentations by CDHB psychiatrist  
Dr Caroline Bell.

## Canterbury

District Health Board

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# RECOVERING



## AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

### Canterbury

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The September and February earthquakes have affected everyone in Christchurch in some way.

You may have lost a loved one, your job, your house and/ or your business. You may have been injured or had to move somewhere else to live. Your children may be especially unsettled.

Now that decisions are being made on rebuilding Christchurch you may have some choices to make. Some people's homes will not be able to be rebuilt in the same place and some may need to live elsewhere while their land is fixed.

Whatever your situation you need to know that help is available. We hope you find this leaflet helpful as you strive to care for yourself and your family through the ups and downs of the recovery process.

Past experience shows that people going through the recovery process, whether they are recovering from natural disasters or personal loss and grief, feel a range of emotions. It's different for everyone.



## COMMON THINGS YOU MAY FEEL:

- Sad and distressed if you have to leave your home and community.
- Worried about the future and how you are going to manage financially.
- Angry about what's happened and angry towards other people.
- Numb, shocked or confused.
- Helpless with so many things out of your control and like it's all too much.
- Exhausted and yet unable to sleep.
- Feeling on edge.
- Difficulty concentrating and planning ahead.
- You lose interest in eating and your stomach is upset.
- You can't seem to remember things and find it hard to make decisions.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

- Be kind to yourself and others – make some time to do things you enjoy.
- Give yourself time to take it all in and take one step at a time.
- Talk about it with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, if this feels right for you.
- Don't expect to make instant decisions. It's normal to feel unsure when something unexpected happens.
- Try to get back into what a normal routine for you and your family would be. Getting back to pre-event "normal" eating and sleeping times will help.
- Exercise may be the last thing you feel like doing but it's a great way to clear your mind and you will feel more energetic afterwards.

## CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

You might not only be coping with your own recovery, you may also be caring for children and/or teenagers who are going through the same process. Children of different ages respond in different ways. The following may help:

- Explaining what is happening at a level they can understand. You may need to do this more than once.
- Try to stay calm even if you feel anxious. Children will pick up on anxiety and often take their cues from adults. A young child may feel something terrible is going to happen and become very frightened, while an older child may blame themselves for how you are feeling.
- Hug your children more often if that is what they need. Younger children may be more clingy, have bad dreams, complain of a headache or sore stomach. Soothe and calm them.
- Remember that your child's fears are very real for them. Talk them through or get them to draw pictures about how they are feeling – whatever works for them.
- Getting back to a normal routine is especially important for children. Regular eating and sleeping times are helpful.
- If your child is aggressive, in a calm and firm manner let them know they can't act this way.
- Friends, school and community are especially important for teenagers. Help them find a way to stay connected. Give them clear guidelines, be a role model and encourage them to solve their own problems while working with you. Remind and praise them for managing the changes they have already made.
- Help them accept that some things have and will continue to change. Listen to them. Together you may not be able to solve everything, but by working it through your teenager will at least understand why everything cannot be fixed and that this is OK.