

After the Storms

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Hurricane season 2004 was a trying time for all of us in Florida. I personally dealt with the evacuation of my family, loss of power in my home, fallen trees, worries about how my close friends and relatives fared throughout the state, and changes in travel plans. Professionally, I was involved in communicating with the dialysis facilities and state agencies before, during and after the hurricanes, to make sure that all dialysis patients were able to receive their treatments. Many dialysis patients from throughout the state of Florida were directly affected by one or more of the hurricanes.

Floridians are still working to recover from Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne, both physically and emotionally. Just the mention of hurricanes can bring up troubling feelings such as anger, anxiety, confusion, depression, fear, frustration, grief, helplessness, and loss. People can take steps to help themselves, family members, and each other cope with these difficult life events. Here are some self-help suggestions:

- Talk to people who you know care about you.
- Do not numb the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse problems will make things worse.
- Keep your life as normal as possible.
- It is all right to spend time by yourself.



- Keep a journal. Writing during sleepless hours may help.
- Do not make any big life changes in reaction to the events.
- Do make as many day-to-day decisions as possible, which will give you the feeling of control over your life.
- Consult a counselor if you need assistance.
- Make plans now on how to find your loved ones in the event of another emergency.
- Take time now to plan for a future disaster - gather water, food, emergency and first aid supplies.
- Help others get through their difficulty.
- Reward yourself with things that make you feel good.
- HUMOR! Laughter can relieve stress and help you to feel better. Rent a funny movie or tell jokes.
- Allow yourself time to recover. Do not expect too much of yourself.
- Watch your diet - avoid caffeine and sugar.
- Get outdoors - take a walk, enjoy a bit of nature.
- Limit the amount of time you spend watching television reports or listening to radio. You can only stand so much disaster news.
- Try to be patient when dealing with others.

Remember that your dialysis social worker is available to help you with disaster planning and with the aftermath of disasters. You may also contact the Network at 1-800-826-3773 for assistance.