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## OHEL

professionals are available to provide support and counseling to any individual or family as well as visit any school, shul, after school program, workplace, shelter, or any group that may benefit from such a discussion.

Whatever the trauma experience, being proactive and seeking professional counseling can be very helpful. Our experience at OHEL, over many years of working with victims of trauma, is that counseling may typically be short term but yields long-term benefits – enabling you and those close to you to regain a sense of equilibrium and prevent a further deepening feeling of loss and grief.

**SEEKING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IS A HEALTHY SIGN  
OF STRENGTH— NOT WEAKNESS.**

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**



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*Serving New York, New Jersey, South Florida and Los Angeles*

*and offering consultations  
in other locations. To  
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**IMPORTANT  
ADVICE FOR  
EVERYONE**

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## HOW TO COPE WITH SUDDEN CRISIS

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# *Rupture, Resilience and Repair*



*This pamphlet made possible by a generous grant from*  
**THE SAMMY & LEA TRENCHER CHERISH THE CHILD INITIATIVE**

## HURRICANES RAGED THROUGH OUR COMMUNITIES, LEAVING HAVOC AND DESTRUCTION.

Everyone has been affected, and in different ways.

Many of our family and friends, schools, and shuls have experienced devastating losses, from the loss of power, to the loss of property, to the loss of their homes. Totally. Schools and businesses came to a halt and are only now beginning to function with some semblance of normalcy. Shuls have been destroyed. Families have been displaced, dislocated, uprooted.

During this catastrophic time, we have been witness to kindness and generosity of the Human Spirit. People have opened their homes to traumatized, dislocated families. Shuls and organizations have set up sites for shelter, and for the distribution of other basic necessities. Rabbis and community leaders have met to develop ways to help their communities. Individuals have thought of everything: from ways to distribute food and clothing, to supplying financial relief to needy families, to protecting *Shaimos*, to helping women who may have lost their *Kesubahs*. No stone has been left unturned in attempts to help our

community access resources and aid in recovery.

This is a true testimony to the resilience of the Human Spirit, of man's need to survive and repair. *Yet, despite the resilience of the Human Spirit, there may well still be trauma; there may still be much to repair psychologically.*

### How do we explain this crisis and resulting trauma to ourselves, children, individuals with disabilities and older adults?

There are many expressions of trauma resulting from a major loss. Depression, a common symptom of trauma, takes many forms. It can result in immobility or hyperactivity. It can cause fits of tearfulness, stoic silence or bouts of anger. It may occur immediately, or only weeks or months later. It can take time for the sense of physical and/or financial loss to creep in and overwhelm our emotions.

**Seeking professional support is a healthy sign of strength— not weakness. You are not alone.**

## Trauma is Individual

It is important to allow oneself – and others – the freedom to express, react and understand in their own individualized way. Remember when dealing with trauma, either in understanding one's own experience, or when helping others, that different members of a family all experiencing the same trauma may react in very different ways depending on their emotional makeup, inner strength and sense of self. Some suffer only briefly, aided by emotional support and the passage of time. Others are more deeply affected and may experience long-term problems. *What may seem to be a trivial story to you, may be a life-changing and important episode to another.*

## Reactions & Responses to Crisis – Be aware of these 'normal' responses:

- Feelings can become intense and unpredictable and moods may change.
- Adults may become agitated, anxious, and/or paranoid
- Sudden flashbacks may occur leading to physical reactions
- Difficulty in concentrating and decision making
- Disrupted sleeping and eating patterns
- Fearful memories may be triggered by sounds of sirens, waves
- Interpersonal relationships may become strained
- Extreme stress may result in headaches, nausea and chest pain and require medical attention
- For children, individuals with disabilities and older adults, these reactions may be more pronounced
- Children may regress; thumb-sucking and bed-wetting may reoccur
- Children may have temper tantrums, social isolation or poor academic performance
- Pre-existing medical conditions may be exacerbated

## Ways to Heal & Restore Emotional Well-Being

- Give yourself and your family time to heal
- Help people meet basic needs of food, shelter or clothing
- Validate other people's feelings. Don't tell people what you think they should be feeling
- Provide simple and accurate information, without causing undue anxiety. This is especially significant for children, individuals with disabilities and older adults
- Ask for support from people who can empathize
- Communicate to others in ways you find comfortable by talking to others, or keeping a diary
- Seek professional mental health counseling
- Engage in healthy behaviors such as exercise, listening to music, a hobby, or volunteering
- Keep to regular schedules or daily routines
- Spend more time with your younger children, allowing them to be more clingy than usual
- Physical affection is very comforting to children
- Provide play experiences to children to help relieve tension, especially non-verbal activities such as drawing or modeling clay
- Encourage teens to talk by allowing them to express questions, doubts or feelings that "it's not fair"

CHANCES ARE THERE IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO RELIES ON OHEL TODAY.

WE'RE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

PLEASE CALL: 1-800-603-OHEL (6435) OR  
E-MAIL: INFO@OHELFAMILY.ORG

KEEP IN MIND THAT THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO REACT TO A DISASTER.  
BE SENSITIVE TO EACH INDIVIDUAL'S REACTION AND RESPONSE.