



**American  
Red Cross**

## **COPING WITH THE JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE, TSUNAMI AND RADIATION DISASTER**

Our hearts go out to the people of Japan affected by the recent earthquake, tsunami, and radiation disaster. Many people may also have specific worries about loved ones in Japan, or about possible radiation effects to the United States and the U.S. Territories. *Are my loved ones in Japan okay? When will the damaged nuclear reactors be brought under control? Will the radiation spread overseas? What can I do?*

For people concerned about **U.S. citizens living or traveling in Japan**, the best way to get in touch is by contacting the U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Citizens Services, at 1-888-407-4747 or (202) 647-5225. People living in Japan or other countries in the Pacific may also have registered with ICRC's website, <http://www.icrc.org/familylinks>. This website lets those impacted by the disaster post information about their status, and current contact details. Family and friends who are concerned can check the website for postings, and also can register names of those they are seeking and encourage them to get in touch.

As those of us here in the United States work to come to terms with this tragedy in Japan, it's important to know that everyone can take a few steps right now to help build resilience and better cope with this disaster:

**Maintain a Hopeful Outlook.** Know that many experts, governments and response agencies from around the world are working hard to assist the disaster survivors and stabilize the damaged nuclear reactors. Progress and recovery will take time—be patient.

**Stay Informed, But Don't Overdo It.** Stay informed about the unfolding events. Your local public health department is the best source for up-to-date health information about radiation or other health concerns. Accurate information can reduce anxiety. However, don't overdo it. Reading or watching too much about the tsunami or radiation can increase your stress.

***Limiting children's exposure to the media is especially important.***

**Keep in Touch With Family and Friends.** We can find comfort and strength when we receive and provide support to those around us. Helping others can also increase our sense of purpose and accomplishment and reduce feelings of helplessness.

**Eat Healthy and Drink Plenty of Water.** Maintaining a balanced diet and drinking plenty of water helps you stay strong and reduce stress. Limit use of alcohol, caffeine and similar substances.

**Spend More Time With Your Children.** Spend additional time with your children and answer any questions they have about the disaster. Be sure to use words that they can understand, and provide realistic reassurances.

Experiencing stress after a disaster is normal. Most stress symptoms are temporary and will resolve on their own. However, if you or your loved ones are losing sleep, having frequent nightmares, unable to stop thinking about the disaster, or having thoughts or feelings that frequently interfere with your daily activities, get in touch with your personal physician or mental health care provider.

For more information about building resilience and coping with disasters, contact your local Red Cross or community mental health professional.