

Work Disruptions Caused by the Spill

- » Many tourists and fishing businesses may be hurt.
- » Fatigue and increased stress from worries about personal issues can lead to poor work performance.
- » Conflicts with co-workers may increase because of the added stress.
- » Businesses may be forced to lay off employees, or company work hours and wages may be cut.
- » Reduced income may require taking a second job.
- » Daily travel and commute patterns may be disrupted because of the loss of a car or road reconstruction.

Financial Worries

- » Many people on the coast were just recovering from Ivan, Katrina and the bad economy.
- » Those who experience work disruptions may be unable to regain their previous standard of living, leading to financial concerns and unpaid bills.
- » Seeking financial assistance to rebuild and repair damages adds to the already high levels of stress caused by the disaster or traumatic event, and the hassles of dealing with a bureaucracy can add to the frustration.

Contact Information

AltaPointe Health Systems, Inc.

251-450-2211

www.altapointe.org

Baldwin County Mental Health Center

800-558-8295

www.bcmhcal.com

Deaf/HOH Fax 334-242-3025
or Phone/VP 334-239-3558

How to Be a Survivor from the consequences of this Ecological Disaster

Regardless of individual circumstances, everyone needs to complete several steps to recover from the oil spill.

- » Accept the reality of the loss.
- » Allow yourself and other family members to feel sadness and grief over what has happened.
- » Adjust to a new environment.
- » Put closure to the situation and move on. Do not continue to let the loss take its physical, emotional or spiritual toll.
- » Have faith in better times to come.
- » The damage to the environment will get better over time.
- » The fish and the wildlife will come back.
- » The beaches will recover and the tourism industry will rebound.

You and your family will survive the oil spill. These troubles do not mean that your lives are over or that you don't deserve to be happy again. Continue to do things you enjoy with friends and as a family. Maintain the routines of your life. Make commitments and keep them.

If you or a member of your family still has trouble coping, ask for help. Consult a counselor or mental health professional. In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from your human resources department or your company's Employee Assistance Program. For help with financial matters, contact a financial advisor.

*Information provided from materials published by **SAMHSA** and **HHS**

Tips for Surviving the Oil Spill in Alabama



Alabama Department of Mental Health
www.mh.alabama.gov

PROJECT REBOUND
GULF COAST COMMUNITY

Things to Remember When Trying to Understand the Oil Spill in Alabama

- » No one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it.
- » It is normal to feel anxious about you and your family's safety.
- » Sadness, grief and anger are normal reactions to the damage to our environment and livelihoods.
- » Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- » Focusing on your strengths and abilities will help you to heal.
- » Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- » We each have different needs and different ways of coping.
- » Gulf coast residents are tough and independent but anyone may need assistance with these types of challenges.
- » The sea marshes and wildlife are part of our coastal life and the damage from the oil can make us sad and angry.

Signs that Stress Management Assistance Is Needed

- » Confusion and difficulty communicating thoughts
- » Limited attention span or difficulty concentrating
- » Becoming easily frustrated
- » Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- » Depression, sadness and feelings of hopelessness
- » Mood swings and crying easily
- » Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- » Headaches/stomach problems
- » Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- » Colds or flu-like symptoms
- » Difficulty sleeping
- » Poor work performance
- » Reluctance to leave home
- » Fear of crowds, strangers or being alone
- » Difficulty maintaining balance

Ways to Ease the Stress from the Spill

- » Talk with someone about your feelings (anger, sorrow and other emotions) even though it may be difficult.
- » Don't get upset if you cannot help with clean-up.
- » Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life patterns or by adjusting them. A healthy approach to life (e.g., healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, meditation) will help both you and your family.
- » Maintain a normal household and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities of yourself and your family.
- » Spend time with family and friends.
- » Participate in memorials, rituals and the use of symbols as a way to express feelings.
- » Use existing support groups of family, friends and spiritual/religious outlets.
- » Review your hurricane plan. It can be comforting to know that there is something you can do.

A disaster like the oil spill can have far reaching effects in several major areas of our lives, making rebuilding our emotional lives extremely difficult. However, sometimes just knowing what to expect can help ease the transition back to a normal life. As you and your family begin to rebuild your lives, you may face any or all of the situations described below:

Personal Uncertainties from the Spill

- » Feeling mentally drained and physically exhausted is normal.
- » The loss of a home, business or income may result in worry and confusion about the future.
- » Unresolved emotional issues from pre-existing problems or previous losses may resurface.
- » Anniversaries of the disaster or traumatic event remind us of our losses. This reaction may be triggered by the event date each month and may be especially strong on the yearly anniversary of the event.

More Stress in the Family

- » Relationships may become stressed when everyone's emotions are heightened and conflicts between family members may increase.
- » Family members or friends may be forced to move out of the area to find work, disrupting relationships and usual support systems.
- » Parents may be physically or emotionally unavailable to their children following a disaster or traumatic event, because they are busy cleaning up or are preoccupied, distracted or distressed by difficulties related to the event.
- » Parents may become overprotective of their children and their children's safety.
- » Children may be expected to take on more adult roles, such as watching siblings or helping with cleanup efforts, leaving less time to spend with friends or participate in routine activities, such as summer camp or field trips. Parents need to be cautious about overburdening children.