

Editorial statement

Mental healthcare efforts for the public after the Great East Japan Earthquake

“Guide to Good Mental Health for Those Affected by Natural Disasters” published by the Cabinet Office

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Abstract

One year after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Office for Policy of Suicide Prevention of the Cabinet Office published and distributed three stages of pamphlets under the supervision of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry, promoting understanding about mental healthcare for those affected by natural disasters. Pamphlets are meant for universal usage and have commonly been used not only in the area affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake but also where earthquakes have occurred in other regions since the Great East Japan Earthquake and in areas affected by typhoon and flood damage. We hope three kinds of pamphlets can be useful for not only in Japan but also outside Japan.

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Keywords: The Great East Japan Earthquake; Mental healthcare; The Office for Policy of Suicide Prevention of the Cabinet Office; Repeatedly playing a game of disaster; Feel relieved

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, in March 2012, the Office for Policy of Suicide Prevention of the Cabinet Office published and distributed a circulation of approximately 600,000 pamphlets¹ under the supervision of the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry, promoting understanding about mental healthcare for those affected by natural disasters. The pamphlet was entitled as “Guide to Good Mental Health for Those Affected by Natural Disasters” (Japanese title was “Hotto Anshin Techo”).

People were subjected to have major stress by the greatest earthquake on record. It is of course important that mental healthcare experts support them, and that the national government expands their knowledge of the mental healthcare needs of the public. Therefore, these pamphlets have been distributed by the Cabinet Office’s Office for Policy of Suicide Prevention to promote the reduction of people’s emotional stress and the long-term risk of the suicide among people who experience such stress.

These pamphlets cover the following 3 stages: (1) the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, (2) six months after the earthquake, and (3) one year after the earthquake. The two-page pamphlets are sized A4 paper volume (210 × 297 mm). They offer a guide to mental healthcare for those affected by natural disasters, which is appropriate to each of these three stages and is given in direct terms.

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¹ Japanese title of these pamphlets is “Hotto Anshin Techo”. This means “Notes to feel relieved”.

To look after yourself and others

For Those Affected by the Disaster:

- Try to talk to the people around you.
- It is natural to become worried and anxious, but in most cases this will gradually ease.
- Sleep may be difficult but simply lying down gives you rest.
- It is important to support each other instead of trying to heal painful feelings.
- Don't carry on alone and seek advice from someone close or professionals.

To Help Friends and Neighbors feeling anxious:

- Sit next to them and comfort them.
- Talk slowly making eye contact.
- Use short and clear sentences.
- Do not force them to talk about their painful experiences and express emotions.
- Listen to their concerns whether emotional or physical.



Caring for your children:

- Do not leave a child alone. Try to make them comfortable and secure.
- Hug them and maybe nurse the painful area.
- Accept that children may behave oddly; resorting to baby-like behaviour and depending excessively on adults. Or they may become selfish.

(Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)



Guide to Good Mental Health for Those affected by Natural Disasters

Take the first step by talking to people around you.



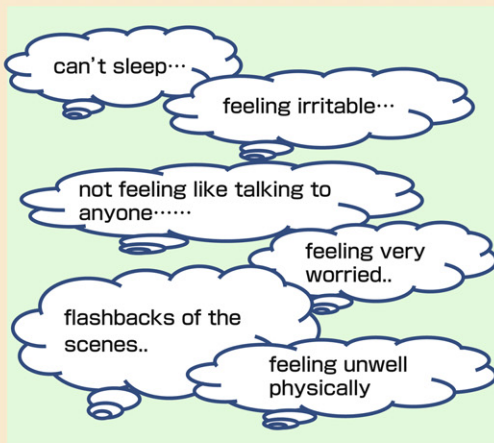
For Those Affected by the Disaster

Cabinet Office

Editor: National center of Neurology and Psychiatry

Bodily and Mental Changes after the Disaster:

Various changes may occur in your body and mind after the shock.



These are mostly normal reactions to abnormal severe events. In most cases, healing occurs as time goes by as long as protection is provided.

Measures that one can take to ease these symptoms;

- 1. Rest**
- 2. Eat meals and keep hydrated**
- 3. Avoid too much alcohol and caffeine as in coffee, green tea and black tea**
- 4. Try not to shoulder worries and troubles alone but share them with the people around you**
- 5. Say hello and talk to each other**

To help relax - 'Take 6 seconds to exhale and another 6 seconds to inhale. Repeat this for 5 minutes each in the morning and evening'.

In most cases it is not illness, but if the condition persists for a long time, consult with the doctors or community nurses.



Fig. 1. Pamphlet #1: This is sourced in the site of the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan; http://www8.cao.go.jp/souki/koho/pdf/pamph-leaf/anshintetyo/a4_oritami_eng.pdf.

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