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One Year Ago

Last year, weather events in the month of March forever changed the lives of many Nebraskans. It will take years for most to recover. The anniversaries of these disasters can trigger emotions of sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, and loss. These feelings are common and natural for healing, but there are ways to cope and to help those affected get through the trauma.

First, celebrate your strength! Take time to reflect on how much has been accomplished over the past year and take time to thank your neighbor or check up on affected friends across the state. Strategies like talking with trusted friends and family about memories or writing thoughts in a journal are helpful ways to continue to heal.

During this time of COVID-19 isolation, make an effort to communicate with people via phone, email, or text every day. Stay connected! Volunteering, even if not in the public eye, as a way to remember the loss is a positive coping technique. Spending time serving others to mark the event provides a time of reflection and remembrance. Helping others also provides positive feelings for a person.

The following are tips from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)) for how to cope with these trigger events:

- **Be aware that special days may be difficult.** Simply recognizing that your feelings are normal will help. Dealing with losses and the new realities you are facing after a disaster can be challenging. Try not to be too hard on yourself.
- **Be gentle with yourself.** Show yourself the same kindness and patience you would give to others during this time. Allow yourself to feel angry or sad and recognize that these emotions are natural.
- **Participate in activities that you enjoy.** This may be different depending on the individual. Some people like to reflect in solitude while others prefer spending time with family and friends for support.
- **Talk about losses.** If you want to talk about your losses since the disaster, do it. If you want to talk about the future, that is an option, too. Be sure to share your thoughts and feelings with someone trusted – a friend, family member, or health care professional.
- **Draw on your faith or spirituality.** For many, faith and other spiritual beliefs are a source of strength and comfort every day, and most especially during difficult times. Reach out to your faith adviser, spiritual community, or anyone that you feel comfortable talking with about your beliefs to support and console you.
- **Accept kindness and help from others.** Support from family and friends is essential to healing. It is often difficult for people to accept help because they don't want to be a burden to others, or don't want to appear weak. Allow the people in your life to show their care and concern. Remember, it helps them, too!

For more information on dealing with disaster-related stress or other stress, visit disaster.unl.edu or ruralwellness.unl.edu.