

Harvey Support Handbook

Every Houstonian has a Harvey story. While all have been impacted, each person has his or her own unique experiences, emotions and responses.

This handbook has been prepared to support you and your family as you navigate the emotional aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. If a question arises while you look through this guide, please refer to the resource list and we would be happy to assist you.

Page 2-Grief Cycle

Page 3 to 4-Normal vs. Extreme Signs of Distress

Page 5-Coping Tools

Page 6 - Parenting when Life is Hard

Page 7-How to Process Harvey with Kids

Page 8-How to Process your own Harvey story

Page 9-How to Care for Yourself to Take Care of Others

Page 10 to 11- Survivors Guilt

Page 12-How to Detox to Avoid Secondary Trauma

Page 13-The Gifts of Suffering

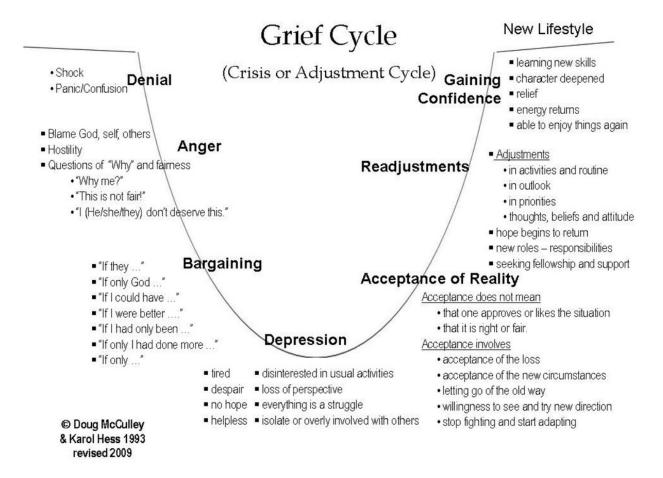
Page 14-Spiritual Support

Page 15-Counseling and Support Group Referrals

Page 16 to 17-United Way Resource List

Prepared by Amanda Grace Caldwell, LPC-Intern, Certified in Critical Incident Stress Management

The stages of grief are not linear; they are cyclical.



People experience anger one day and peace the next. Sometimes, you will experience multiple emotions at once. Picture yourself on the grief cycle. What stages are you experiencing? What needs to change to get you to a place of Acceptance?

Three ways to process grief (Adam L. Mason, MAMFC, LPC-S):

- 1. Allow yourself Time
 - a. Time to think
 - b. Time to feel
 - c. Time to be
- 2. Speak
 - a. Speak your thoughts out loud
 - b. Verbalize what you are feeling
 - c. Speak to another person
 - d. Speak the words out loud as you write in a journal
 - e. Sing songs that connect with your soul
 - f. Don't let words or feelings sit in darkness or silence
- 3. Look
 - a. Look for love
 - b. Look for beauty
 - c. Look for life
 - d. Look for hope



Normal vs. Extreme Signs of Distress

Everyone has a Harvey story. Each of us have been impacted in unique ways. Because of this, people will also heal in a unique way.

Normal Signs of Distress

- Cognitive
 - Inability to Concentrate
 - Guilt
 - Preoccupation with the event
 - Difficulty in Decision Making
- Emotional
 - Anxiety
 - Anger
 - Mood Swings
 - Depressed Mood
 - Grief
 - Fear; Phobia
- Behavioral
 - Impulsiveness
 - Excessive Eating
 - Substance use
 - Withdrawal
 - Sleep Disturbance
 - Crying Spells
 - Hypervigilance
- Physical
 - Headaches
 - Fatigue/exhaustion
 - Indigestion/nausea/vomiting
 - Muscle spasms
- Spiritual
 - Anger at God
 - Withdrawal from faith community
 - Crisis of faith

Extreme Signs of Distress (seek a professional when experiencing these symptoms)

- Burnout
 - Decrease in quality of work
 - Cynicism
 - The desire to relocate, divorce or change careers
 - Chronic negativism
 - Desperation that life is slipping away
 - A general dissatisfaction with life, family, career
- o Panic
 - Sweating
 - Heart Palpitations
 - Nausea
 - Belief one is dying
 - Uncertainty
 - Hopelessness
- o Depression
 - Emptiness
 - Hopelessness or helplessness
 - Suicidal Ideation
 - Loss of Appetite
 - Weight loss
 - Diminished energy
- o Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - If these reactions are interfering with your ability to function on a daily basis, seek help from a professional.
 - Key Features
 - Intrusive memories and recollections of the event \rightarrow distressing dreams, flashbacks and or intrusive thoughts/images
 - Persistent avoidance of/withdrawal from people, places and/or things associated with the traumatic event, as well as depressive symptoms
 - Persistent symptoms of increased arousal, such as hyper startle reactions, irritability, angry outbursts and sleep disturbance.
 - Violations of Five Core Beliefs
 - "The world is just or fair."
 - O Why did this happen?
 - "Guilt and violation of sense of self-esteem and character."
 - I should have done something else; I should have not done something; I should have done something more.
 - "Abandonment, Betrayal, violation of trust."
 - o I feel betrayed by someone.
 - "Violation of a sense of safety."
 - o The world now seems like an unsafe place.
 - "Violation of coherency"
 - This traumatic event has taken away the glue that holds the world (religion, spirituality, etc.) together.

Coping Tools

Questions to Ask Yourself

- o What has equipped you to work through grief, loss, or something difficult before?
- O What needs to be in place for you to feel safe again?
- O How would you feel supported by others right now?
- O Where can you get information? Who is the best person to talk to about that?
- O What do you need right now?
- Focus on doing the next best thing for you and your family
- O What has allowed you to work through this so far?

Healthy Coping Tools

- Rest
 - Are you getting too little sleep?
 - Are you getting too much sleep?
- Simplify your life/Be Gentle with yourself
- Get outside
 - Go on a walk; breathe in fresh air.
- Exercise
- Reframe
 - What is one way to view this situation differently?
- Eat Healthy Foods
- O Distinguish what is True from what is a Thought
- o Practice Self-Care (What is something life-giving you can do to care for yourself?)
- Be Aware of what you are listening to and what you are watching
 - Certain images, sounds, and smells might be triggering right now.
- Find a safe place
 - Sometimes, our "safe place" might be an image in our minds.
- Find a way to express your experience/tell your story
 - Journal/Write out your story
 - Talk to a trusted friend
 - Speak to a professional
- Develop internal support
 - How can you turn to God in this time?
 - What small groups are available for you?
 - Prayer/Meditation
 - Scripture reading
- Seek external support
 - Everyone needs a support system, especially in times of distress.
 - Who can you speak to or spend time with right now?
- Know your limits
 - Use boundaries with what you can handle and what you can't right now.
- o Gratitude
- Play-do something fun! (It is good and healthy to laugh)
- Relaxation Techniques (Deep breathing, music, art, reading)

Parenting when Life is Hard

By Jill Gilbert, LPC, LMFT

Parenting is hard. Life is hard. What happens when they are hard at the same time? Below are steps to help you handle both. A positive by-product of suffering is that our children can experience how a family and community pulls together when life is hard.

- *Find your Compass*-The below will help you process your own emotions so that you can be available for your child's emotions and keep up with your parental responsibilities.
 - Spend time with God—get centered and grounded in Him
 - Seek counsel (Mentors, Pastoral Care, Therapists)
 - Support from Trusted Personal Relationships
 - Clarify Values—what is truly important right now?
 - Process—use music, art, journaling, books
- Model Resiliency
 - Nurture relationships
 - Nurture faith
 - Practice Gratitude
 - Don't forget to play. It is healthy to laugh and play.
- Model Healthy Coping
 - Take care of your mind, body, heart and spirit.
 - Teach your children to do the same.
- Model Healthy Grief
 - Do your own heart work
 - Use child-appropriate language to describe feelings of sadness, fear or loss.
- Model Serving in the Community
 - Serve others with your spiritual gifts and invite children into that.

Processing Harvey with Kids

Written by Michelle Collins, LPC, Certified Clinical Trauma Counselor, EMDR certified

Hurricane Harvey has come and gone and left destruction of property, emotions and stability in its wake. In situations like these, survival becomes priority and safety comes first.

What is helpful is remembering the three phases of trauma recovery:

- 1. Safety & stabilization
- 2. Remembrance & mourning and
- 3. Reconnection and integration back into life.

In Houston right now, we are in between phase 1 and phase 2.

A younger child's (age 3 and below) concept of safety lies primarily with his/her caregivers. Older children look to things like their home environment, toys, as well as caregivers to establish a sense of control and safety. This is good news in terms of helping children process being displaced from their homes but can add extra work for parents as well.

Below are some practical steps you can take toward ensuring your child's mental stability throughout the process of recovery.

If you, as the parent can:

- 1. Communicate your decisions to your children,
- 2. Help them talk through their understanding and emotions of the experience,
- 3. Talk with them through how you are keeping them safe and the actions you will take if certain threats become real, your child will feel connected and understood through the chaos.

Reassure your child of their safety and of the family's connectedness throughout all the chaos. This needs to be done verbally but also through your body language and actions. Take time to play and relax throughout the day. Connect with your kids and allow them to see you smiling whenever possible.

Taking sentimental toys, stuffed animals basically transition objects with you might seem trivial but these objects can be key to helping your child feel safe and connected. Take time to talk about the object and help them connect to it when they are trying to sleep/waking up to keep them connected and grounded in the midst of chaos and change.

Keep routines as much as possible. Try to keep routine in the way you structure their day with play, learning, resting time. Keep your bedtime routine the same: sing the songs they know, read the books or recite the book from what you remember.

Allow them to tell their story of what happened and how it made them feel. This is a key part of processing the trauma and allowing them to start the healing process.

And above all, **keep checking in with your child** and see how they are doing.

Sometimes we forget about our littlest members of our families during survival mode. I want to remind us that while children might not have the words yet to express all the deep intense emotions we feel as adults, their minds are absolutely capable of feeling those emotions.



How to Process your own Harvey Story

It is important to wrestle with and tell your story after times of tragedy. You can write your story, share it with a friend or tell a professional. Spend time reflecting on your story and know when you need to seek professional help. Some questions to consider as you process your story and look ahead:

- Where were you when the storm hit?
- What items were you able to save? What made these important?
- Who was with you?
- How were you rescued?
- How have you handled times of loss or stress before?
- How can you be courageous in this moment?
- What has calmed you down in the past? How can you do this now?
- What can you be thankful for right now?
- How has Harvey impacted you and your family?
- What emotions are you experiencing?
- What "characters" are a part of your story? Neighbors, friends, strangers?
- What was the scariest moment(s) for you?
- Describe (at least) one moment you felt hope or relief.
- Describe the most impactful moment in your Harvey journey so far.
- What is one lesson you learned during this storm?
- What is the best next step you will take in your life (based on this lesson)?

If life becomes unmanageable and your daily functioning is impacted, consider seeking professional care. If these questions are too triggering or you are experiencing the symptoms on page 4, contact a counselor in your area.



How to Care for Yourself to Take Care for Others

- Process your own story-Use the questions on page 8 to assist with this.
- **Seal in your Service** It's important to seal in your service no matter how you are serving. Start and end with a prayer. Begin and end with a Bible verse. Or, start and end with a song.
- **Rest**-You can't help if you end up sick in bed. Get enough rest, eat well and get outside and move. Rest so that you can give your best to the people you are serving.
- Stay Connected-Do not work yourself out of social connection.
- Have Fun-Pick one fun thing to do each week. We all need something to make us laugh, something to distract us, something to look forward to.
- **Be Gentle with Yourself**-In times of stress, it's important to be gentle with ourselves. Go slow and focus on doing the next best thing. To be gentle with ourselves is to go slow, take a bubble bath or take a break when needed. Now is not the time to push or force. Ask God to show you how to help each and every day. He will bring you the right people and the right tasks.
- Don't Outshoot your Coverage-Know when you need a professional to help you assist someone in need.
- **Serve with a Team**-Having a shared experience with others helping will give you support and the ability to process the stories you are hearing and the experiences you are having.
- Mix Physical with Emotional Service-If you are serving in a role that requires a lot emotionally, take
 a break and spend some time serving on specific tasks. Vice Versa.
- Let go of the Guilt-Do not judge or compare your experience
- Simplify
- Be Honest about your intentions to help-Is it coming out of unhealthy guilt or duty?

Pace yourself. This is a marathon. Not a sprint. Practice the above to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue. You are just one part of recovery. Do not carry the whole responsibility.

Survivor's Guilt

What is Survivor's Guilt? Survivor's guilt (sometimes referred to as "survivor syndrome") refers to the psychological condition of someone who witnessed or was involved in a traumatic event that may have harmed others, but left the affected individual virtually unscathed. The affected individual, however, is impacted by the emotional scars that resulted from witnessing the traumatic event.

Common Symptoms may include:

- Nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping
- Flashbacks to the event
- Loss of motivation
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Thoughts about the meaning of life

Coping with Survivor's Guilt:

- Acknowledge and validate your own hurt or grief. You have permission to grieve even if you feel "spared."
- There is not a hierarchy of pain and trauma. We all have unique experiences.
- Normalize your reaction. Survivor's guilt is a common reaction in a crisis.
- Give yourself the space and time to feel and to grieve. You are allowed to do this.
- Do not judge or compare your experience.
- Is the guilt you are experiencing healthy or unhealthy?
 - O Unhealthy-Does the guilt make you feel overly responsible? Or require penance?
 - Healthy-Does the guilt call you to action and to serve (within your capability and means) and to empathy?



Survivor's Guilt

A Letter by Adam L. Mason, MAMFC, LPC-S Minister of Counseling Services Houston's First Baptist Church

Blessings can be like babies, coming in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Sharlene and I were blessed to have not flooded. The water never came over our sidewalk. We never lost power, water, television service, or internet. We had a refrigerator full of delicious food which we prepared fresh each day. Our Tuesday: we spent the afternoon watching some of the children from down the street work on puzzles while the adults casually chatted and wondered out loud if we really need flood insurance, since we did not flood in such a major event.

Bobby, my father-in-law, experienced a different type of blessing. His home flooded. Again. This is his third time to flood: Tropical Storm Allison, the Tax Day Flood, and Hurricane Harvey. This time was different though. This time he was home. The water started coming into his house Monday morning. By 1:00 pm he had 3 inches in his home, and it was still raining. He raised his garage door to check on the weather and the street and the van in the driveway, and he saw a man walking in the waist deep water – pulling a boat. The good Samaritan had driven from Waller to Cypress that morning, bringing his boat to help people. He took my father-in-law to dry ground, where he caught a ride to a shelter at Metropolitan Baptist Church. They gave him a mattress, a blanket, and a pillow. His Tuesday: the crew from the McDonald's across the street came to work, cooked the morning's allotment of breakfast, delivered it to the shelter, then closed the restaurant and went home. It was a good breakfast. He ate it among strangers, with whom he had little in common. They were also evacuees. On Wednesday afternoon, the flood waters had receded enough for Bobby get a ride back to his house. The water in his home had crested at 6 inches. He turned on his electricity, set the air conditioner at 72 degrees, gathered a few belongings, backed his dry car out of his garage and drove over to our house. So many blessings.

I dare think that my father-in-law's experience of God's blessing, love, and provision are deeper than mine.

There is a tendency to think that those of us who are spared hardship are "more blessed" than those who are not. We question our worthiness for such an honor professing "Why us, God?" We think that something is wrong because others have experienced "more than their fair share of pain" while we remain relatively comfortable. But what is really wrong is our way of thinking. We have a faulty theology of suffering.

In reality, the blessing of protection is rather shallow when compared to the blessing of deliverance. Perhaps God's love and comfort are felt more in suffering than in safety; more in need than in plenty.

In his message yesterday, Pastor Gregg mentioned "Survivor's Guilt". He suggested that for those of us that had survived with no or minimal damage there is a great responsibility. We must use our resources in helping those who have none. This giving of ourselves is our place of deeper blessing.

Blessings can be like babies, coming in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Those of us who did not experience great loss do not all have the same ability to help. Not everyone can cut sheetrock, or spend 6 hours on our feet sorting clothes. But we can all so something. As the pastor says, we are either going, giving, praying, or disobedient.



How to Detox to Avoid Secondary Trauma

A Letter by Adam L. Mason, MAMFC, LPC-S Minister of Counseling Services Houston's First Baptist Church

A report published Wednesday, December 9, 2009 by the University of California at San Diego stated that the average American consumes 34 gigabytes of content and 100,000 words in a single day. I believe that during natural disasters these numbers go up. We have been inundated with images, sounds, and words from the television, internet, and radio chronicling the events unfolding around us. In addition to the sheer volume of this information increasing, the content of the information changes as well. The information becomes much more emotional. It is virtually impossible to not be affected by what we hear, see, and smell happening all around us. Our minds and hearts cannot escape unaffected by this deluge.

It has been over a week since Harvey made landfall. I can call him Harvey now and not Hurricane Harvey because I feel that we are on a first name basis. This has been a much more intimate storm for me - for us. However, In the last 24 hours, the media has shifted their primary focus away from Harvey. Even though *their* conversation has changed, that does not mean that our conversations have changed. Our minds and emotions are still very much focused on Harvey and his effects on our communities.

We still have groups of volunteers going into homes pulling out carpet, cutting off sheetrock, and throwing out formerly valuable items. At the end of the task these homes are detoxified. Some are sprayed with a combination of bleach and/or mildewcide to kill the bacteria and prevent mold. Others require more drastic cleaning measures. Some homes will simply be destroyed in the interest of public health. Each day, the volunteers must go home and "detox" themselves. By now most of these workers have developed a routine: boots left outside by the door, clothes immediately into the a waiting washer, and body into a hot shower. These steps are both necessary and appreciated at the end of a hard day. It is a discipline that is as rewarding as it is life protecting.

I wonder if we pay the same level of attention to detoxing our thoughts as we do to detoxing our homes and physical bodies? In Romans 12:2, Paul stresses the importance of renewing our mind. Paul understood the onslaught of carnal toxicity to which we are exposed everyday – and Paul did not have the multi-sensory messages of modern media with which we must contend. Some of these worldly influenced thoughts need to left outside. Huston McComb, on the counseling center staff, visualizes leaving his work cares on the push bar of the door to the church as he presses it to open the door on his way home. Some of our memories and emotions need to be sanitized by the refiner's fire – there is some good waiting to be revealed. Some of what we have experienced just needs to be destroyed. We leave those behind and move forward.

Modern psychological research indicates that it only takes 60 seconds of quiet meditation to reset the mind. 60 seconds. 1 minute. Set aside some time to day to clear your mind from everything but God and His love for you. Detox. Reset. Rest.



The Gifts of Suffering

- Intimacy with God
- Intimacy and authenticity with friends and family
- Feeling "awake" to life
- Experience the Body of Christ
- Values are clarified
- Enhanced ability to serve and understand others in pain and suffering
- Enhanced meaning in life



Spiritual Support

In times of fear or chaos, we must remember what is True. Below is a chart to help distinguish between Though and Truth.

THOUGHT	TRUTH
God doesn't care.	"Jesus wept." John 11:35
God feels far.	"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." Psalm 34:18
We are invisible.	"The God who sees me." Genesis 16:13
We are forgotten.	He hears our prayer. Psalm 17:6
We are displaced.	We are adopted in Christ's family. Ephesians 1:5
We are scared.	He is our peace. Ephesians 2:14
We are confused.	"God is not a God of disorder but of peace." 1 Corinthians 14:33
We are hurting.	"He binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3
Where do we go?	"You are my hiding place." Psalm 32:7
We feel guilty.	"Carry each other's burdens" Galatians 6:2
We feel helpless.	"Practice hospitality." Romans 12:13
What do we do?	"Do good and share with others." Hebrews 13:16
It is dark around us.	"God is light." 1 John 1:5
We feel overwhelmed.	"I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28
We are tired.	"Those who trust in the Lord will find their strength renewed." Isaiah 40:31
We are stirred.	"Repentturn to God." Acts 3:19
The waters are rising.	"He reached downand drew me out of deep waters." Psalm 18:16
We are heartbroken.	"Deep calls to deep." Psalm 42:7
We feel lost.	"And I will lead the blind in a way they do not know" Isaiah 42:16

Additional Resources and Referrals

Counselors:

- Katie Ashby
 - 0 713-581-9100
- Jill Gilbert
 - o 713-581-9100
- Denise Rhew
 - o 713-581-9100
- Sandy Bond
 - 0 832-493-6965
- Nancy Cofran
 - 0 281-772-1017
- Katie Adams
 - 0 281-277-8811
- Trisha Taylor
 - o 512-922-4000
- Tim Mavergeorge
 - 0 281-277-8811
- Michelle Collins
 - 0 832-598-1734
- Guy Gourley
 - o 281-398-2509
- P.K. Loeffler
 - o 713-461-1606

MDPC Resources:

- Staff Members (Call main church line at 713-782-1710)
 - o Brett Hurst, Relationships Pastor
 - Rick Myers, Caring Ministries Pastor
 - Amanda Grace Caldwell, Counselor-in-Residence
 - o Beverly Fluke, Member Care Director
 - Kakki Thompson, Caring Ministries Director

Community Resources:

- Interface-Samaritan Counseling Center
 - 0 713-626-7990
 - www.houstonsamaritan.org
- Houston Center for Christian Counseling
 - o 281-398-0022
 - o www.christiancounselinghouston.com
- Bo's Place (Grief Support/Support Groups)
 - o 713-942-8339
 - o www.bosplace.org



ABOUT MHA

FIND HELP

NEWS & MEDIA

ADVOCACY

CENTER FOR SCHOOL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

PROGRAMS

GIVE NOW

HURRICANE HARVEY RESOURCE LIST

(as of 8/31/17)

When disaster strikes, often people react with increased anxiety, worry and anger. With support from community and family, most of us bounce back. However, some may need extra assistance to cope with unfolding events and uncertainties.

Houston Numbers

Emergencies - 911 (life threatening emergencies)
Emergency rescue: 281-464-4851 (US Coast Guard)

Non-emergency city services: 311

Additional help: 211
Evacuation registration: 311
Evacuation routes: 1-800-452-9292
Roadside assistance: 1-800-525-5555
Gas leaking: 713-659-2111 or 888-876-5786
Power outage: 713-207-2222 or 800-332-714

Power outage: 713-207-2222 or 800-332-7143 State Bar of Texas Legal hotline: 800-504-7030

CenterPoint for downed power lines or gas lines: 888-876-5786 Price Gouging: Texas Attorney General: 1-800-621-0508

HARRIS COUNTY NUMBERS

Harris County Emergency Management: 713-881-3100 Harris County Non-Emergency: 713-221-6000

Towed Cars

findmytowedcar.com must know your License Plate Number or VIN Number

Crisis Clean Up

1-800-451-1954 number will be available through September 15th, this is not a line for urgent needs, it is likely going to take some time to get to your need.

FEMA

Apply online disasterassistance.gov or call (800) 621-3362/TTY (800) 462-7585 during standard hours of operation (7 a.m. to 11 p.m.) Eastern Time 7 days a week

Documents you may need:

- · Social Security Number
- · Address of the location where the damage occured (pre-disaster address)
- · Current mailing address
- Current telephone numbers
- · Insurance information
- Total household annual income
- Routing and account number for your checking or saving account (this allows FEMA to directly transfer disaster assistance funds into your account.

Crisis Numbers

Suicide Hotline 1-800-784-2433
Crisis Intervention Houston: 832-416-1177
Mobile Crisis Outreach Team: 713-970-7520
HPD Mental Health Unit 713-970-4664
Houston Police Department 713-884-3131
Crisis Hotline (Main) 713-468-5463 (English) 713-526-8088 (Spanish)
Gay and Lesbian Switchboard Houston 713-529-3211
Ben Taub Psychiatric Unit 713-873-2636

RESOURCES

Find Help

Area Resource Guide

Events and Training

Give to MHA

UPCOMING EVENTS

Suicide Prevention Week September 4, 2017 - midnight

Community Health Worker Training Series September 5, 2017 - 10 a.m. United Way of Greater Houston Registration Required — Register HERE Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders, Wednesday, June 21st ...

more events »

MEDIA CENTER

The Emotional Backpack Project Launches for the New School Year August 7, 2017

Addressing Stigma and Minority Mental Health Through Awareness August 3, 2017

Texas Firefighters Highlight Increasing PTSD Rates At Houston Conference August 2, 2017

more headline news »

CONTACT INFORMATION

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GREATER HOUSTON

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NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP

NeuroPsychiatric Center (NPC) 713-970-4600 National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255 National de Prevencion del Suicidio 1-888-628-9454 National Suicide Prevention - Options for Deaf & Hard of Hearing 1-800-799-4889 Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255

Shelters

Click here to access a list of shelters >>

Hurricane Tips and Resources

Home Flooding, Preparing for Rescue, Tornado, Calling 911

Click here to access a list of tips and resources >>

Behavioral Health Brochures

Coping and Helping Others Cope with Hurricane Harvey

Click here to access a list of behavioral health brochures >>

<u>Print</u>

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