

Simple Strategies to Cope with the Aftermath of Tropical Storm Ernesto

In the wake of Tropical Storm Ernesto, many people across Puerto Rico are grappling with the emotional and physical aftermath of yet another devastating storm. For many, the memories of past hurricanes like Maria and Fiona may resurface, adding to the stress of the present situation. It's understandable if you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or emotionally drained. No one expects you to be operating at full capacity right now. That's okay. Given these challenges, here are some simple, proven strategies to help you feel better in this moment:

1. **Give Yourself Grace and Compassion:** Allow yourself to not be at your best right now. It's perfectly okay to take things one step at a time.
2. **Treat Yourself as You Would a Friend:** If a friend were going through this, you'd likely tell them to be kind to themselves. Extend that same kindness to yourself.
3. **Practice Simple Breathing Exercises:** If you feel stuck in a cycle of anxiety or exhaustion, try this: Inhale to a count of 4, hold for 2, and exhale for 6 counts. Do this three times in a row, as often as needed throughout the day.
4. **Start Your Day with Gratitude:** Even in difficult times, identifying small things you're grateful for can shift your perspective. For example, "I'm thankful for a warm meal, a roof over my head, or the people who care about me."
5. **Limit Your Exposure to News:** Constantly consuming media updates can add to your stress. Give yourself permission to step back and focus on what's directly in front of you.
6. **Move Your Body:** Even a few jumps or stretches each hour can help release tension. Keep it simple but keep moving.
7. **Reconnect with Water in Positive Ways:** Water may currently be associated with destruction but try to reframe your relationship with it. Notice how water quenches your thirst or cleans your hands and focus on the positive aspects it brings to daily life.
8. **End Your Day with a Win:** Reflect on one positive thing you did today, no matter how small. For example, "I comforted a loved one," or "I helped a neighbor."
9. **Stay Calm to Stay Effective:** Calmness can help you think and act more effectively. Find a safe space, stretch when you can, and try to rest, even if only for short moments.
10. **Embrace Your Own Style of Coping:** Everyone handles stress differently. Focus on what works for you, without comparing yourself to others or feeling pressured to act a certain way.
11. **Lean on a Buddy:** If possible, find a buddy to check in with daily. The buddy's role is simple: to listen and support you, without judgment.

Need More Support?

If you're feeling overwhelmed or need more immediate help, there are resources available. Through the Mental Health and Addiction Services Administration's (ASSMCA) PAS Line, crisis intervention services are provided to help stabilize and support you during this time of disruption. The purpose of these services is to assist in the process of emotional restoration, decreasing the effects of the crisis while promoting growth and building skills for resilience.

These services are staffed by an interdisciplinary team of mental health professionals dedicated to supporting you. If you or someone you know needs help, please don't hesitate to reach out to the PAS Line, dial 988, or chat [lineapas.assmca.pr.gov](https://www.migrantclinician.org/witness-to-witness) for 24/7 support.

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The Witness to Witness Program | <https://www.migrantclinician.org/witness-to-witness>