

WEATHER THE STORM

Supporting women to
prepare for disasters
and emergencies



TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

This document is the second in a set of three documents:

1. Weather the Storm Program Manual
2. **Weather the Storm Tools and Templates**
3. Weather the Storm Resources

In this document you will find specific information, worksheets and tools referred to in the Weather the Storm Manual to assist you in designing your program. Some of these are for your reference and some can be photocopied and shared with participants. They include:

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SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

[LOGO OF AGENCY]

WEATHER THE STORM – WOMEN PREPARE

You are warmly invited to participate in a new, free program being offered in [Community Name] in [Month and year] by the [Name of agency].

The program will bring women from the local community together to discuss, plan and support each other to be more prepared for potential disasters common to the region.

In recent years, Australians have seen a dramatic increase in disasters. While natural disasters such as fire and flood have made headlines, there are many other potential scenarios. Prolonged loss of electricity, water or food supplies, pollution or chemical spills, pandemics and strike action are all possibilities.

Any of these scenarios have the ability to seriously impact us at any time. We may become housebound for days, we may be unable to access basic services or food, we may need to evacuate or we may not have a home to live in.

Women, especially those with dependents, have particular needs and vulnerabilities during and after a disaster. Women also make a unique and vital contribution to preparation and recovery efforts.

Being prepared for any and all possibilities – an ‘all hazards’ approach - takes some thought and preparation. Luckily, even a little bit of both can make a huge difference to a family’s experience of a disaster.

Often we want to get organised and prepared. It is something we think and talk about - but we never find the time to actually do it. Here is your opportunity.

The Program is **free** and it is **in your local area** with free **on-site childcare** over [number of days e.g. five Tuesday mornings with morning tea provided] All you need to do is come along!

The details are:

[Start and Finish Time]

[Days and dates]

[Venue name]

[Venue address]

For more information go to www.nrwc.com.au or social media

To register, book childcare or ask any questions, please contact me.

Warm regards,

[Name and contact details]

STORIES

Here are a number of stories and poems that we used in the program to frame issues in a different way.

Some of them we planned to use but found the right moment didn’t arise, some we used spontaneously when the moment arose. The stories are told without reading (much easier than you imagine with a little practice). We gave the poems out as a handout and read some in the session.

LITTLE OLD HOUSEKEEPER STORY

Years ago, a wealthy family lived in large house in a remote, cold area of the Scottish Highland. They were constantly advertising for a house keeper and staff.

Most people were reluctant to work on through the winter months in the snowed-in landscape of Scotland. They dreaded the awful storms and being snowed-in and house bound for weeks on end, even months. The mistress of the house often spent a day each week selecting and interviewing applicants, but mostly she received a steady stream of refusals.

Finally, a short, thin woman, well past middle age, approached the estate. “Are you a good house keeper?” the mistress asked her. “Well, I can sleep when the snow falls,” answered the little old woman.

Although puzzled by this answer, the mistress was desperate for help, so she hired her. The little old woman worked well in the house, busy from dawn to dusk, and the family felt satisfied with her work.

Then one night a wild storm raged outside and snow came in steady heavy drifts, blowing against every door and window of the house. There would be no leaving for days.

Jumping out of the bed the mistress grabbed a lantern and rushed downstairs to the house keeper’s sleeping quarters. She shook the housekeeper awake and yelled, “Get up! A storm is coming! Go and bring the chickens in and harvest the potatoes and carrots.”

The little old woman rolled over in bed and said firmly, “No ma’am. I told you, I can sleep when the snow comes.”

Enraged by the response, the Mistress was tempted to fire her on the spot. Instead, she hurried outside to move the chickens, pull up the last vegetables and bring in the firewood.

To her amazement, she discovered that the chickens were in the barn, all the vegetables had been collected and enough wood for the whole winter was under cover. She went into the pantry and saw row upon row of preserved food. Enough for a whole winter.

The mistress then understood what her house keeper meant, so she returned to her bed to also sleep while the snow fell.

So the obvious moral of this story is get a good house keeper!!!

THE CRICKET STORY

One day when I lived in the city, I was going to eat lunch with a friend. We were walking though Bourke Street Mall (adapt for your local city). It was lunch hour and very busy. There was lots of noise, people bustling along, some buskers trying to have their music heard and trams thundering past and dinging their bells.

All of a sudden my friend said to me “I can hear a cricket”.

I said “No way, you couldn’t possibly hear a cricket in all this noise. Besides how on earth could there be a cricket here in the city.”

“No, I really can hear a cricket. I’ll show you.” She walked over to one of the big planters they have in the mall, parted the leaf litter and there underneath was a cricket.

I said "Wow! You must have amazing hearing!"

She said, "No my hearing is just the same as yours. Watch." She reached into her pocket, pulled out some change and threw it on the ground. The tinkling sound was not loud but it was un-mistakable and every head turned to see where the noise was coming from.

"See?" she said, "It's all a matter of what you're listening for".

Draw from this the connection to awareness of possibility for disaster. It is not a matter of living fearfully on the edge of risk, but of trying to maintain a consciousness of risk and taking steps where possible to reduce the risk.

GOOD LUCK, BAD LUCK

There was once an old woman named Ursula, who lived in a small village with her adult son Ivan.

They were poor and worked hard to survive on the land they had. They had one horse to help them. One day the horse broke its tether and ran away. Ivan was devastated and said to his mother, "What are we going to do? That horse did most of the really hard work for us, this is terrible, we'll never survive." Ursula looked at her son and simply said, "Who is to say it is terrible? It is what it is." Ivan couldn't believe his ears and knew she would see differently in a few months.

But the very next week the horse returned and brought with it 12 other wild horses. Ivan was ecstatic and said to his mother "Mother this is fantastic, we are rich, these horses will bring a fortune and we'll never be poor again." Again Ursula simply said "Who is to say it is wonderful? It is what it is, lets bring in the harvest".

A few days later Ivan was in the yards working with the wild horses to tame them enough to sell, when he fell and was trampled. He broke his leg and cracked his ribs. He was in agony. He said "Oh mother you were right, those horses will bring us nothing but trouble, this is terrible I am in agony and now I can't help you with the harvest. Whatever are we to do?"

Ursula again said "Who is to say? It is what it is."

This time Ivan had to argue back 'Mother how can you say that? Look at me I am in agony I tell you, this is terrible.' Ursula did not reply.

A week later the military came through the village and conscripted every able bodied man to fight their war, most of them were never to return. Ivan did not go. Ivan finally said "Mother you are right, who is to say, it is what it is."

These poems can be given as a hand out and used to begin a session or frame a discussion.

WEATHER THE STORM - WOMEN PREPARE POETRY TO SUSTAIN AND INSPIRE

WHEN SOMEONE DEEPLY LISTENS TO YOU

by **John Fox**

www.poeticmedicine.com/poetry.html

THE CONTRACT A WORD FROM THE LED

by **William Ayot**

www.williamayot.com/contract.htm

TROUGH

by **Judy Brown**

www.inspirare.wordpress.com

PREJUDICE

Prejudice by **Maria Sudibyo**

www.poemhunter.com/poem/prejudice-23/

KINDNESS

by **Naomi Shihab Nye**

www.elise.com/q/poetry/naomi.htm

EXAMPLE INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

The following frame or introduction is an example (as with all of these frames) to assist you in working out what you want to say at the beginning of the program.

Begin with your name and your story of how you come to be here and how the program's delivery evolved. Then continue:

"Underpinning this program is an acceptance, on principle, of the need to prepare - whether it is for a natural disaster, which seems to be increasing, loss of power or water, personal or family crisis, loss of income, financial collapse, war or pandemic. They are all possible. In the course of my lifetime they are likely and in the course of my children's lifetime they are very likely. And so I prepare for myself and the responsibility I have to my family, trying to show my children - by example - how to prepare for what will at some stage happen to them.

Also I believe preparing is something we have done for thousands of years to varying degrees. We have always needed to live by the cycles of the seasons, prepare for the hard times and have plans for disaster.

But I also believe passionately that such preparation must be driven from within the individual and they must be allowed to find their own path.

Each of us will weigh up all the information in the context of our own values, beliefs and lifestyle and then take action accordingly.

We need to be supported, validated and accepted for taking the steps that feel right for us and our lives.

Some of us will set about the task with all the dedication of Noah, or as they are called in modern America, "preppers". Preppers, or survivalists, are preparing for the end of the world as we know it. They often have:

- *Survival Bags ready to go*
- *A group location they will go to if society breaks down*
- *Emergency medical supplies*
- *Self-defense training and guns*
- *Stockpiles of food and water,*
- *Materials and skills to enable them to survive or 'disappear'*

Most of us will think it is a good idea but never quite find the time or the support to properly prepare. And I am one of them and this is one of the reasons I do this work.

We often feel lectured by authorities about what we should do, but we are given little support to actually do it or we are overwhelmed and wonder if any of it is worthwhile given the random chance of it happening at all.

Often we blindly put our faith in the systems and structures of authority and think about how 'they should' do X, Y and Z.

And when it is all over, there is often an overwhelming urge to blame 'THEM', the powers that be, for letting it happening.

Is it any wonder we have become somewhat dependant on authorities to protect us from disaster? Often they do. And so we become very vulnerable, individually and as a community.

Is it any wonder we have become somewhat dependant on them to protect us from disaster. Often they do. And so we become very vulnerable, individually and as a community.

Lots of people are really interested in learning, but we need to provide the learning environment where they can think about their own situation and apply the information to their lives.

Women in particular are:

- *Often keen to learn and prepare because of the male domination of the emergency services*
- *More vulnerable because of the dependents they look after*
- *Often responsible for the running of the house and the functioning of the family*
- *Often on their own with dependents*
- *Great networkers and crucial in community preparations and recovery.*

There have been women in groups preparing and doing what you have come here to do, all over the world. There has been a program developed and delivered in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

It is highly likely some of you will go home from this work and spend a night or two awake and worrying about all that you need to do to get ready or the terrible things which might happen. THIS IS QUITE NORMAL. Many people never prepare for this reason, as they are too scared to face their fears and work through them. But you will work through them if you keep at it. You become more confident and calmer by learning and preparing.

It is also very true that the steps for preparing can be overwhelming. The fear and the tasks combine to create a paralysing inertia.

It takes years and you may never actually get to where you have completely overcome this - but you can get to a point where you are comfortable.

So this leads me to the principles underpinning the program.

These are not instructions in traditional sense the program is participatory. It aims to provide stimulation for you to think through issues and how they might be resolved given your character, family, location and lifestyle. It allows for the act of talking, to change and cement thoughts and commitment to action.

The program aims to build group connection for 3 reasons:

1. *Your participation will be greatly enhanced if you feel comfortable with the others*
2. *Community and individual resilience is strengthened when we connect and*
3. *It will build the foundation for exploring the possibility of an ongoing group.*

What happens on the inside of us is just as important, if not more important, than what happen on the outside of us. Psychological preparedness is crucial and a significant aspect of this program.

The more you talk about and prepare for disaster the less you worry and feel scared!

We will create a PARKING board for things outside our control. We will be focusing on what we can influence, not what worries us or makes us angry or frustrated. I will continually try to bring you back to what you can affect. If you really want to take action, you must focus on the actions you can take."

GROUP AGREEMENTS GUIDELINES

It is important for any group to have a conversation about how they wish to work together.

This is not a matter of listing a set of 'rules' but to articulate the values and practical aspects of groups coming together. The instructions for one way of developing group agreements are provided here.¹ This section will also introduce a simple and effective facilitation process that groups can learn during the program, and may find it of use if they continue to meet after the program.

Instructions for the session:

FRAME

"As a group we need to develop a few guidelines for how we will work together over the course of the program. To start with, I want to outline a process I would like to use during the course of this program and seek your agreement to using it."

Circle process using a talking piece:

"This process comes from ancient indigenous cultures around the world going back thousands of years. There are a number of variations but the method suggested here has three 'rules':

- *Honour the talking piece when it is in play*
- *Don't talk or respond when others have the piece*
- *When you have the piece there is never any obligation to speak. You can simply pass it on*

The talking piece and the restraint we exercise in not responding helps us to practice deep listening, so we can just sit and be, listening to what the person said. We often think about what we are going to say and jump in as soon as the speaker has finished, without retaining the value in what they have said. Using a talking piece also allows us to hear from everyone.

Can I just leave this with you for now and use the talking piece process for this next exercise, so that you get a sense of how it works in practice, and then ask you for your agreement at the end?"

Time guideline: Allow 10 minutes minimum per 5 people.

Resources: Paper plate (or round circle or coloured paper) and a marker under each chair.

Instructions:

"Think of a time when you have been in conflict with someone who you really care about.

"What would you want them to say about you in the middle of that conflict?" Just one or two words will be enough.

Write it on the paper plate with markers."

Words typically used are Fair, Understanding, Truthful etc. Don't be surprised if some people don't understand - explain that it is a bit tricky and give an example word to illustrate.

Allow a few minutes for people to think and write the words.

Go around the circle and ask participants to say their word and then place the pie plate on the floor around the circle centrepiece.

FRAME

"These are the kinds of values we would like to have in play when we talk in the circle. These are our foundation.

These words are not rules of behaviour, but reminders of how we would like to be. It is about being our best.

We are not always fair or understanding or even acting our best, but in the circle we try to step a little bit closer to where we would like to be and try to bring our best selves to the discussion.

Are there any values in the circle, which you see differently, or you might not agree with?"

Pass the talking piece around.

Agreements:

"Now I'd like us to talk about some behavioural commitments we would like others to make so it is safe for us to tell our truth.

What would you need other people to bring/do for you to speak your truth?"

Write up on butchers paper.

FRAME

"It is fine if you disagree or prefer other words, as differing views will be noted and held within the space of the circle.

Can you agree and commit to the values and agreements?"

Pass the talking piece around.

"Are you comfortable with the talking piece process, maybe not for every session but for some topics - particularly if we all have ideas?"

FACILITATOR NOTES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS SESSION

This is very large section. The notes that follow and the worksheets provide some suggested topics and activities. It is strongly advised that you experience completing all the activities beforehand, to enable you to better explain and guide participants.

- Introductory story: Good luck, bad luck
- Physical reaction to stress and fear
- Why we look at mental preparation
- Being aware of thought processes is the first step
- Some common negative habits thinking – identifying yours
- Sharing
- Characteristics of resilience
- Locus of control and improving your internal locus of control
- Personal stories
- Skills to anticipate, identify and manage
- Calming techniques
- Strengths activity

A. GOOD LUCK, BAD LUCK STORY – SEE STORIES AND POEMS IN TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

B. PHYSICAL REACTION TO STRESS AND FEAR - WHERE DO YOU FEEL FEAR/STRESS PHYSICALLY?

Hand out the line drawing of a woman's body (see end of this section) and coloured markers.

Explain that you are going to play the SEWS warning [This is the standard emergency warning sound and is available as an MP3 download here www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/sews]

Acknowledge that playing the SEWS may be stressful for some people. Ask that they pay attention to where they feel a physical reaction to the sound.

Play the warning several times but pay attention to the group and stop playing it if you see anyone becoming physically upset.

Ask the women to draw on the body outline where it is that they felt a reaction to the sound. Then ask them to think about where they hold the tension in their bodies when they are tense or stressed. Ask them to mark this on the drawing.

This activity is for developing awareness. You may invite women to share what they have drawn later in the session.

C. WHY WE LOOK AT MENTAL PREPARATION

FRAME

"The ways that we think about ourselves and the things that have happened to us shape how we feel and behave.

Although we cannot change what has happened, we can change the focus of our thoughts in ways that can make us feel more hopeful and less overwhelmed.

The strategies presented here can help people focus on more helpful ways of thinking about themselves and their situation.

By focusing on helpful thoughts rather than upsetting ones, people can improve their mood and pave the way for more effective and adaptive coping skills.

These skills are useful in all aspects of life, in preparing for, in the face of and in recovering from disaster."

To get started, give a basic example of the ways that different thoughts about the same event might lead to different emotions.

Example:

How thinking about being stuck in traffic affects emotions.

"At least I'll miss that boring meeting."

"Oh my God, my kids will be fretting and everyone will think I am a bad mother"

"Why am I always stuck behind stupid drivers?"

Thoughts influence feelings.

- *Angry thoughts produce angry feelings;*
- *Anxious thoughts produce anxious feelings;*
- *Hopeless thoughts produce feelings of hopelessness; and*
- *Calming thoughts help people calm down.*

Thoughts and feelings are different from one another.

Thoughts are words, sentences, or mental pictures that run through our minds like a thought bubble in a cartoon.

Emotions are feelings we have in our bodies when we think a thought. For example, we may feel butterflies when we are nervous, tightness in our chest when we are afraid, heaviness in our chest if we are sad, or light on our feet if we are excited.

For the most part thoughts affect or create feelings, so if we can improve our thoughts we can improve our feelings. Even when the feeling comes first, how we think about the feeling can help or worsen the feeling.

D. BEING AWARE OF THOUGHT PROCESSES – THE FIRST STEP

FRAME

"People experiencing stress often find it helpful to become aware of the unhelpful thoughts and consider whether there are other, more helpful thoughts to focus on that might make it easier to deal with their situation.

For example, instead of thinking "absolutely nothing is going well," a person might think "this is a tough time for me, but I am doing some things well."

Often people do not take the time to look at how they are thinking, so unhelpful thoughts continue to occur more or less automatically.

The basic strategy here is to first spend a little time looking at your thoughts and their effects on your life.

Being psychologically prepared also includes having realistic expectations that an emergency situation such as a bushfire or cyclone event can very quickly become unmanageable, unpredictable and life-threatening."

E. SOME NEGATIVE THINKING PATTERNS²

[It may be useful to give examples from your own life and show your own unhelpful thought patterns to illustrate these ideas]

- 1. Over-generalisation:** Coming to a general conclusion based on a single event or one piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen again and again. Such thoughts often include the words "always" and "never".
- 2. Filtering:** Concentrating on the negatives while ignoring the positives. Ignoring important information that contradicts your (negative) view of the situation.
- 3. All or Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in black and white terms (e.g. things are right or wrong, good or bad). A tendency to view

things at the extremes with no middle ground.

4. **Personalising:** Taking responsibility for something that's not your fault. Thinking that what people say or do is some kind of reaction to you, or is in some way related to you.
5. **Catastrophising:** Overestimating the chances of disaster. Expecting something unbearable or intolerable to happen.
6. **Emotional Reasoning:** Mistaking feelings for facts. Negative things you feel about yourself are held to be true because they feel true. (e.g. I feel like a failure, therefore I am a failure).
7. **Mind Reading:** Making assumptions about other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours without checking the evidence.
8. **Fortune Telling Error:** Anticipating an outcome and assuming your prediction is an established fact. These negative expectations can be self-fulfilling: predicting what we would do on the basis of past behaviour may prevent the possibility of change.
9. **"Should" Statements:** Using "should", "ought", or "must" statements can set up unrealistic expectations of yourself and others. It involves operating by rigid rules and not allowing for flexibility.
10. **Magnification/Minimisation:** A tendency to exaggerate the importance of negative information or experiences, while trivialising or reducing the significance of positive information or experiences.

Recognising your own unhelpful thought patterns is the first step to changing them.

Hand out the Thought Challenger Worksheet (see end of this section)

Instructions:

1. Take a few moments to think about and write down a list of some of the unhelpful thoughts you have at various times.

2. Keep adding to this list as we work our way through the psychological issues."

F. SHARING:

Go around with the talking piece and ask anyone who wants to share with the group:

- "Where do you feel stress fear or tension in their bodies (refer to the body outline sheer)
- Any repeat negative thought habits or patterns you sometimes fall into and
- Any strategies you have developed for managing either thoughts or feelings."

G. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENCE ³

FRAME

"Some key characteristics of resilience have been identified. Many of these characteristics can be developed and strengthened, which can improve your ability to deal with life's setbacks."

Awareness:

"Resilient people are aware of the situation, their own emotional reactions and the behaviour of those around them. In order to manage feelings, it is essential to understand what is causing them and why. By remaining aware, resilient people can maintain their control of the situation and think of new ways to tackle problems."

An understanding that setbacks are part of life:

"Another characteristic of resilience is the understanding that life is full of challenges. While we cannot avoid many of these problems, we can remain open, flexible and willing to adapt to change."

An Internal Locus of Control:

"Do you perceive yourself as having control over your own life? Or do you blame outside sources for failures and problems? Generally, resilient people tend to have

what psychologists call an internal locus of control. They believe that the action they take will affect the outcome of an event. Of course, some factors are simply outside of our personal control, such as natural disasters. While we may not be able to control some external causes, it is important to feel as if we have the power to make choices that will affect our situation, our ability to cope and our future."

Another approach for this which may be useful is emotional Intelligence.
www.helpguide.org/mental/eq5_raising_emotional_intelligence.htm

Strong Problem-Solving Skills:

"When a crisis emerges, will you be able to spot the solution that will lead to a safe outcome? In danger situations, people sometimes develop tunnel vision. They fail to note important details or take advantages of opportunities. Resilient individuals, on the other hand, are able to calmly and rationally look at the problem and envision a successful solution."

[A couple of books which can be a good source of stories for illustrating these concepts are: "Deep Survival: Who lives, who Dies and Why" by Laurence Gonzales and "The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes – and Why" by Amanda Ripley]

Having Strong Social Connections:

"Whenever you are dealing with a problem, it is important to have people who can offer support. Talking about the challenges you are facing can be an excellent way to gain perspective, look for new solutions or simply express your emotions."

Identifying as a Survivor, Not a Victim:

"When dealing with any potential crisis, it is essential to view yourself as a survivor. Avoid thinking like a victim of circumstance, and instead look for ways to resolve the problem. While the situation may be unavoidable, you can stay focused on a positive outcome."

Being Able to Ask for Help:

"While being resourceful is an important part of resilience, it is also essential to know when to ask for help. During a crisis, people can benefit from the help of psychologists and counselors specially trained to deal with crisis situations."

H. LOCUS OF CONTROL AND IMPROVING YOUR INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

FRAME

"Research has shown that those with an internal locus of control - that is, they feel that they control their own destiny, rather than their fate being largely determined by external forces - tend to be happier, less depressed, and less stressed, and more resilient during and after a disaster."

Fortunately, if your locus of control is not as 'internal' as you would like it to be, there are things you can do to change your locus of control and empower yourself. The key for your own personal development is to understand your natural tendencies and then adapting them to the situations you are faced with."

Give out the Locus of Control sheet (see end of this section)

Ask women to complete it and assess their Locus of Control level, either at home or in the group if time permits.

NB: Be careful not to set this up as a competition or a value judgment of who has the 'best' locus of control. It is probably best not to ask people to share their score or if you do, make sure there is a lot of validation. (e.g. "This is not a fixed number; you can change your locus of control at any time".) Highlight that the aim is to become aware of your tendencies, how these affect you and what you can do to improve them.

It is also good to acknowledge that it is a frustrating test to complete because you are asked to make choices between two things, neither of which you may agree with.

Tips for Developing an Internal Locus of Control ⁴ [Great to illustrate these with examples]

- Recognise the basic fact that you always have a choice. Making no choice is actually a choice in itself. It is also your choice to allow other people or events to decide your response for you.
- Pay attention to your **self-talk**. When you hear yourself saying things like, "I have no choice" or "There's nothing I can do", step back and remind yourself that you do, in fact have some degree of control. It is your choice whether you exercise it or not.
- Phase out phrases like, "I have no choice", and, "I can't..." You can replace them with, "I choose not to," or, "I don't like my choices, but I will..."
- When you feel trapped, make a list of all possible courses of action. Just brainstorm and write things down without evaluating them first.
- When you have a list, evaluate each one and decide on the best course of action for you, and keep the others in the back of your mind as alternative options. You may end up with the same answer you had before the brainstorming session, but this exercise can open your eyes to the number of choices you have in a given situation. Seeing new possibilities will become more of a habit.
- Repeat this practice when you feel trapped in frustrating situations in your life. In more casual, everyday situations, you can still expand your mind to new possibilities by doing this quickly and mentally.

I. PERSONAL STORIES:

Ask participants to:

"Think about a time when you were scared/in danger/in a disaster situation.

In particular think about a time you experienced some of the physical symptoms.

I am going to ask you to share afterwards so try to make it one you are willing to share.

It might be the mere threat of something, or when facing childbirth, or a car accident or any time you faced your own mortality."

Circle round: Emphasise that there is no obligation to speak. Participants should feel free to simply pass when the talking piece comes to them.

"Share with us the moment and then reflect on:

What this might tell you about how you react to danger, fear and/or stress; and

What you can learn from it?"

J. ANTICIPATE, IDENTIFY, MANAGE ⁵

FRAME

"There are three main steps to being psychologically prepared for a threatening natural disaster: AIM – Anticipate, Identify, Manage

1. Anticipate the anxiety and concerns that will arise. ANTICIPATE that you will be feeling worried or anxious and remember these are normal, although not always helpful, responses to a possible life-threatening situation.

- To begin preparing yourself for the natural disaster that may be coming, try to anticipate what your likely response to the situation will be. People usually become physically aroused in highly stressful situations. Common physical symptoms include:

- Racing heart and palpitations
- Shortness of breath and dizziness
- Tense muscles
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Nausea
- Numbness or tingling
- Headaches

- Expect that the situation will be highly stressful and think about how you usually

react to stress. Although these reactions are very natural they can get in the way of other necessary preparations. Some common thoughts people may have when thinking about disasters are:

- Denial – it is not going to happen to me
- Having not been through a disaster, they can't imagine what it would be like and do nothing
- Blindly following what others are doing and not think about it
- Or not dealing with it at all because:
 - It is uncontrollable
 - It's just another warning situation that probably won't happen
 - We live in the 21st century so we'll be OK
 - We were OK last time and we'll be OK this time
 - We had a disaster last year so we're not due for one for a long time

If you understand your usual reactions, you can learn ways to be better prepared to manage them when they happen.

- 2. Identify** uncomfortable or distressing thoughts and feelings that may cause further anxiety. The way people feel in highly stressful situations is strongly affected by the way they cope with the signs of physical arousal (e.g. racing heartbeat, shortness of breath) and the thoughts that they are having (e.g. 'I can't cope'; 'We are going to get badly hurt').

These reactions and thoughts can make people feel anxious, hopeless or even angry, and while these feelings are understandable, they are not very helpful in an emergency situation.

IDENTIFY what the specific physical feelings associated with anxiety are and whether you are having any frightening thoughts that are adding to the fear.

It's important for people to tune into the specific feelings and thoughts they are having in response to a threatening natural

disaster, as this will help them to find ways to manage them.

When these physical reactions to stress begin, they usually trigger stressful thoughts such as:

- I can't cope
- This is awful
- I'm so afraid
 - I'm panicking
 - I don't know what to do
 - We're going to get hurt
 - We'll all die
- The whole town will be destroyed

- 3. Manage** the responses so that the ability to cope remains as effective as possible. MANAGE your responses using controlled breathing and self-talk so that you stay as calm as possible and can focus on the practical tasks that need attending to.

In stressful situations, people can feel more in control through two strategies:

- 1. Slowing down their breathing to help calm the physical arousal symptoms; and*
- 2. Replacing frightening thoughts with more helpful ones.*

- Notice what is happening to your body and the physical sensations that tell you that you're feeling anxious.
- Try to focus on the frightening thoughts you may be having that are adding to the fear. What exactly are you saying to yourself? Are your thoughts helping you or making things harder? Check whether you are jumping to conclusions.
- Remind yourself that strong bodily sensations and frightening thoughts are normal reactions to stress but they are not helping you to stay calm and rational.

Do not be too critical of yourself though!"

See Australian Psychological Society publications: www.psychology.org.au for tip sheets on disasters.

There are a range of other useful publication available through this website.

K. CALMING TECHNIQUES

Handout: Relaxation and Stress Management Techniques (see end of this section)

FRAME

“There are two main popular techniques for calming ourselves.

1. *Focus on the breath*

- It can be a great exercise to guide a short, deep breathing activity, and follow this up as an activity at the start and finish of other sessions.

2. *Replace unhelpful thoughts with calming ones*

- *When concentrating on breathing out slowly, say to yourself ‘Relax’, or ‘Stay calm’, or ‘It’s OK, I’m managing OK’. These are good words to use because they are associated with feeling relaxed and in control.*

- *Try not to dwell on the bad things that might happen, but instead tell yourself that the calmer you are, the better you will be at managing exactly what needs to be done.*
- *Faith can also be a great help to calm and replace frightening thoughts.*

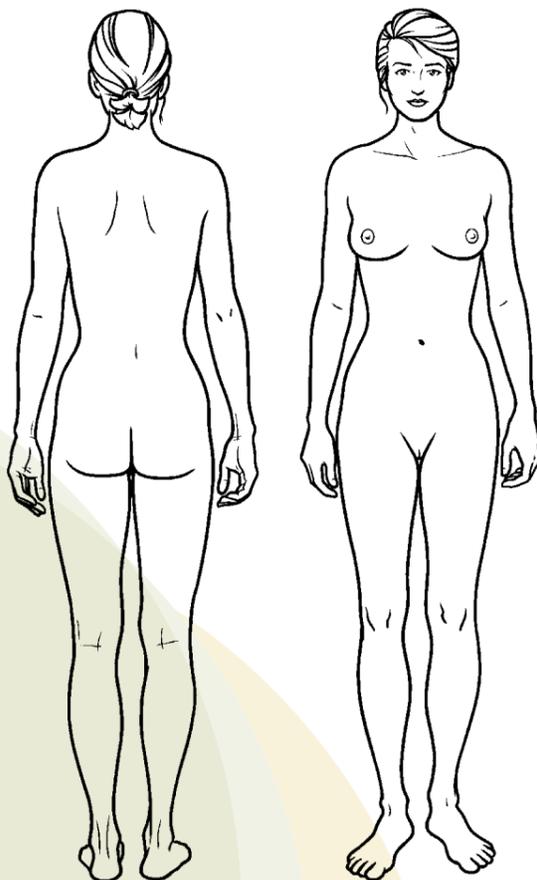
All these things benefit from practice, the more you practice beforehand the more you can manage at the time and the more you will benefit in peace times as well as crisis.”

L. STRENGTHS ACTIVITY

If you can, use the Strengths Cards produced by St Luke’s Bendigo (see link below) or any other resource that can ask participants to reflect on the strengths they have and can rely upon in a crisis, to finish this section.

(St Luke’s Bendigo Strengths Card can be viewed at www.innovativeresources.org)

BODY OUTLINE



THOUGHT CHALLENGER WORKSHEET

Identify the unhelpful or negative thoughts you hear most often.

| WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, WHEN YOU ARE FRIGHTENED, STRESSED, IN CONFLICT, WHAT THOUGHTS DO YOU HAVE THAT MAKE THINGS WORSE? | WHAT WOULD BE A MORE BALANCED, HELPFUL OR POSITIVE THOUGHT? |
|---|---|
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| | |

Whenever you notice a negative thought:

- Say to yourself STOP
- Repeat your balanced thought two or three times – this will help to turn down the volume of the negative thought

It is useful to practice balanced thinking. As you get up each morning, repeat your balanced thoughts to yourself.

Don’t just listen to your negative thoughts. Challenge them.

ROTTER'S LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE TEST

Instructions

Read each pair of statements and choose which statement you agree with more.

1. a. Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much.
b. The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.
2. a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.
b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
3. a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.
b. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.
4. a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.
b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he tries.
5. a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.
b. Most students don't realise the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.
6. a. Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.
b. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.
7. a. No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you.
b. People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.
8. a. Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality.
b. It is one's experiences in life which determine what they're like.
9. a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
b. Trusting fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.
10. a. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test.
b. Many times, exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.
11. a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.
12. a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
b. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little person can do about it.
13. a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.
14. a. There are certain people who are just no good.
b. There is some good in everybody.
15. a. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.
b. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.
16. a. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.
b. Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability - luck has little or nothing to do with it.
17. a. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand nor control.
b. By taking an active part in political and social affairs, people can control world events.
18. a. Most people don't realise the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.
b. There really is no such thing as "luck."
19. a. One should always be willing to admit mistakes.
b. It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.
20. a. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.
b. How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.
21. a. In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
b. Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.
22. a. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.
b. It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.
23. a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
b. There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.
24. a. A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do.
b. A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.
25. a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
b. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.
26. a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.
b. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.
27. a. There is too much emphasis on athletics in high school.
b. Team sports are an excellent way to build character.
28. a. What happens to me is my own doing.
b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
29. a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.
b. In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.

Score one point for each of the following:

2.a, 3.b, 4.b, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a, 9.a, 10.b, 11.b, 12.b, 13.b, 15.b, 16.a, 17.a, 18.a, 20.a, 21.a, 22.b, 23.a, 25.a, 26.b, 28.b, 29.a.

The higher the score the more external the locus of control, and the lower the score the more internal the locus of control.

MENU PLANNER - 'TEN DAY SHELTER IN PLACE'

| SHOPPING LIST | FIRST THREE DAYS FROM FRIDGE AND FREEZER | | | |
|--|--|-------|-------|-------|
| | DAY 4 | DAY 5 | DAY 6 | DAY 7 |
| BREAKFAST (Including any drinks and any special dietary requirements) | | | | |
| LUNCH (Including any drinks and any special dietary requirements) | | | | |
| DINNER (Including any drinks and any special dietary requirements) | | | | |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| DAY 8 | DAY 9 | DAY 10 | SNACKS AND TREATS |
|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|

SCENARIOS

Cyclone, Gas explosion, Pandemic, Heatwave, Prolonged and widespread power failure,

CYCLONE:

It's after the cyclone. There is destruction everywhere. The community buildings have been destroyed including the school. Most of the houses in the community have been damaged. The few businesses are completely wiped out. The roads out of town are impassable. There is water everywhere and it is still raining.

Scenario 1

Your house has experienced significant damage. You were in it when the roof tore off and you thought you were going to go with it.

What might you be thinking and feeling?
What strengths are you going to reach for?
What thoughts will be helpful?

Scenario 2

Its seven weeks later and you are still homeless. You have been living in a caravan in the mud in the yard of one of the few standing homes. Half the community has left. Your partner won't talk about anything.

What might you be thinking and feeling?
What strengths are you going to reach for?
What thoughts will be helpful?

Scenario 3

You evacuated and you can't get back. You've heard your house has been destroyed so you can't go back to live there anyway. You have been staying with friends but tensions are surfacing. There are no rental properties. Your kids are crying, fighting or keep saying 'we just want to go home'

What might you be thinking and feeling?
What strengths are you going to reach for?
What thoughts will be helpful?

Scenario 4

Your house is fine but it nearly went during the cyclone. You now have two families living with you. Your food is running low although there are some weekly deliveries. They say the road will be fixed soon but a falling tree wrecked your car.

What might you be thinking and feeling?
What strengths are you going to reach for?
What thoughts will be helpful?

GAS EXPLOSION

It is 5.30pm and you are preparing dinner. There is an enormous explosive sound from some distance away and the windows rattle. The power goes out. If your wisest, best self was present:

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?

You find out there has been a gas mains rupture and explosion two streets away. You can hear screams. If your wisest, best self was present:

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?

What preparations do you hope you have made?

PANDEMIC

There has been a deadly flu pandemic overseas. It has killed thousand's of people. There have now been 54 cases in your state.

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?

You then hear that someone at your child's school has been diagnosed.

If your wisest, best self was present:

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?
What preparations do you hope you have made?

HEATWAVE

For some reason you have been convinced to host your relative's 80th birthday in January. 40 people are coming and all the arrangements are made. Several guests are coming from interstate and even some relatives from overseas. It is three days before the party it is predicted to be over 35°C for the next five days.

What do you do?
If you decide to go ahead what do you do?

You decide to go ahead with the party. An hour after the party begins the power goes out. It is 41°C outside. If your wisest, best self was present:

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?
What preparations do you hope you have made?

PROLONGED POWER FAILURE

It is the middle of a weekday afternoon. The power goes out. You find your radio and non-electric phone. You listen and hear there is a serious and widespread power failure affecting a large part your region. It will be out for at least a day.

What do you do?
What preparations do you hope you have made?

Two days later the power is still off and you hear that it will be at least a week before the power is restored. There is pandemonium. The supermarkets are emptied and the shopping centre ransacked. The plumbing doesn't work and there is no water.

If your wisest, best self was present:

What would you think?
What would you feel?
What would you do?
What preparations do you hope you have made?

WEATHER THE STORM SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY WORKSHEET

Name (optional) or first name only

Age group: 15 - 34 35 - 54 55 plus

Location of program

TITLE OF STORY
(can be completed after finishing the sheet)

1. Tell me how you (the storyteller) first became aware of the Weather the Storm program and why you were interested in attending.

.....
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2. From your point of view, describe a story that best describes the most significant change that has resulted from your involvement in this program:

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3. Why was this story significant for you?

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AGENCIES / PARTNER LOGOS

MONTH / YEAR

WEATHER THE STORM WOMEN PREPARE

Certificate of Participation

AWARDED TO

QUOTES FROM WOMEN TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT

Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn't people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them?

Rose Kennedy

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.

Louisa May Alcott

The wind shows us how close to the edge we are.

Joan Didion

'Tis the set of the sail that decides the goal, and not the storms of life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it.

Maya Angelou

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

The only safe ship in a storm is leadership.

Faye Wattleton

I really do think that any deep crisis is an opportunity to make your life extraordinary in some way.

Martha Beck

Seeds of faith are always within us; sometimes it takes a crisis to nourish and encourage their growth.

Susan Taylor

What one decides to do in crisis depends on one's philosophy of life, and that philosophy cannot be changed by an incident. If one hasn't any philosophy in crises, others make the decision.

Jeanette Rankin

Stress is basically a disconnection from the earth, a forgetting of the breath. Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency. Nothing is that important. Just lie down.

Natalie Goldberg

There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth, the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.

Dorothy Thompson

I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.

Rosa Parks

Think wrongly, if you please, but in all cases think for yourself.

Doris Lessing

For in the end, freedom is a personal and lonely battle; and one faces down fears of today so that those of tomorrow might be engaged.

Alice Walker

Ultimately we know deeply that the other side of every fear is a freedom.

Marilyn Ferguson

It is only in sorrow that bad weather masters us; in joy we face the storm and defy it.

Amelia Barr

Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

M. Kathleen Casey

If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

Mary Engelbre

WEATHER THE STORM SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY WORKSHEET

Thank you for your participation in the Weather the Storm program.

As you know this program is in the very early stages of development and so your feedback via this survey is critical to the future direction of the program.

This survey will take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete and will provide us with invaluable information about how you experienced the program. It will help us to improve the program and hopefully source the funds to offer it to other groups of women in Australia.

1. Which Weather the Storm sessions did you attend?

.....

.....

.....

2. What were you hoping to gain from participating in the Weather the Storm program?

.....

.....

.....

3. Overall how successful was this program in meeting your expectations?

- Extremely Successful
- Somewhat Successful
- Neither successful nor unsuccessful
- Somewhat Unsuccessful
- Extremely Unsuccessful
- Don't know

4. Has the program prompted you to do anything to better prepare yourself for a future emergency? If yes, please list the actions you have taken.

.....

.....

.....

5. Before participating in this program, how prepared did you feel to deal with an emergency?

- Extremely unprepared
- Somewhat unprepared
- Neither unprepared nor prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Extremely prepared
- Don't know

6. Since participating in this program, how prepared do you now feel to deal with an emergency?

- Extremely unprepared
- Somewhat unprepared
- Neither unprepared nor prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Extremely prepared
- Don't know

7. If you answered that you feel better prepared since your participation, in what way do you feel better prepared? (Tick as many responses as apply).

- I have better knowledge of my risks
- I have discussed some of the risks with my family
- I have started my Home Emergency Plan
- I have begun to prepare my home
- I feel more confident in my ability to plan for and cope with an emergency
- I feel better prepared emotionally
- I have begun or completed preparing a 72 hour evacuation kit
- I know where to get more information
- I have some people I can go to for help and support if I need it
- Other (please specify)

8. How has your participation in this program effected how you feel about emergencies?

- I feel much safer and less fearful
- I feel a bit safer and less fearful
- I feel about the same as before
- I feel less safe and more fearful
- I feel much less safe and more fearful

9. List three things you plan to do in the next 6 - 12 months to be more prepared for emergencies.

1.

2.

3.

10. Do you believe that this program has had any impact on the strength of the social connections within your community?

- Yes, strengthened connections
- Yes, weakened connections
- No, done nothing
- Don't know

11. The following list includes a range of things that may or may not have been important in motivating you to participate in the program. For each issue please tick whether it was important or not in motivating you to participate in the program.

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Free childcare | | |
| Free refreshments/lunch | | |
| Subject matter | | |
| Advertising | | |
| Time of event (e.g. 9.15am) | | |
| Timing (e.g weekday, school hours, weekend) | | |
| Venue and location | | |
| Targeting women | | |
| Experiencing a recent emergency event | | |
| Other (please specify): | | |

12. Out of the things you marked as important in the previous question, which one was the single most important factor in motivating you to attend the event?

| | Most Important |
|---|----------------|
| Free childcare | |
| Free refreshments/lunch | |
| Subject matter | |
| Advertising | |
| Time of event (e.g. 9.15am) | |
| Timing (e.g weekday, school hours, weekend) | |
| Venue and location | |
| Targeting women | |
| Experiencing a recent emergency event | |
| Other (please specify): | |

13. Thinking about how the program was organised and run, do you have any feedback on things that were done well or how the program could be improved?

14. Thinking about how the program was delivered, are there any aspects of the program you would suggest should be removed or changed?

15. Should this program be run again?

- Yes
- No

16. Would you recommend this program to a friend?

- Yes
- No

If yes, why?

17. Any other comments/recommendations?



National Rural
Women's Coalition

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