



June 1 Means Increased Anxiety, Negative Emotions For Hurricane Victims

Children Will Need Social Support, Normal Routines To Deal With Fears

Contact: [Lori Wright](#)
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

April 12, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- As June 1 approaches, survivors of Hurricane Katrina and other storms will experience increased negative emotions and anxiety as the start of the 2006 Hurricane Season triggers memories of the trauma of past storms. Parents should expect changes in their children's behavior as they struggle to express their fears as the anniversary of the natural disaster approaches.

Victoria Banyard, associate professor of psychology at the University of New Hampshire, is available to discuss common responses and stresses of victims of traumatic experiences, including natural disasters. She has conducted clinical work with children, families and adults who were exposed to traumatic stress, and has studied the resilience of trauma survivors and the role that community played in their recovery. She also has conducted studies on the stress and coping process among homeless families.

According to Banyard's research, exposure to certain traumatic events in childhood can have persistent negative effects on psychological well-being in adulthood, but factors such as social support can buffer some of these effects. "Depending on their age, children will often express how they feel differently. For example, young children may not have words to describe how they feel but may rather 'show' us through disruptions in their behaviors – trouble sleeping, fears, etc. Key for kids is lots of social support and normal routines," Banyard says.

People react to increased anxiety and stress triggered by the anniversary of traumas in many ways, she says – there is no one "right" or "normal" reaction. But having social support from friends, family and community, as well as keeping normal life routines with work, play and hobbies are key to dealing with the increased emotions. This will be particularly difficult for people whose lives continue to be disrupted by last year's hurricane season because they have not been able to return home, she says.

"People need to remember the kinds of positive things that help them cope with stress in general – for some it will be faith or spiritual communities and connections, for others involvement in community organizations or time spent with friends and family or just getting on with the everyday business of life, keeping a journal, etc. The key is for people to listen to themselves and how they are feeling and to take care of themselves and also to seek help from others and even professionals if their feelings of anxiety or fear are starting to interfere with their daily lives," Banyard said.

EDITORS AND REPORTERS: Banyard is available to further discuss trauma victims

and the start of hurricane season. She can be reached at vlb@cisunix.unh.edu and 603-862-2869.