

Strategies for Working in a Disaster Environment

Working in a disaster environment engages a worker in activities that may be traumatic as well as personally meaningful. One of the best ways of coping with any difficult experience is to recognize both the positive as well as the negative aspects of the

Some of the positive and negative aspects of working in a disaster environment may include:

Positives:

- Opportunity to use initiative and creativity.
- Opportunity to use leadership potential and skills.
- Unique professional experiences, learning and growth.
- Opportunities for collaboration and feelings of teamwork that may be absent in normal situations.
- New relationships.
- Expanded sense of community.
- Feelings of helpfulness, effectiveness, and accomplishment.
- Feeling of having contributed to something important, something that really mattered.

Negatives:

- Traumatic stimuli, e.g., damaged buildings.
- Loss of pain, e.g., loss of work environment, work materials.
- Frustrations of the job, e.g., inadequate supplies, communication breakdowns, lack of information.
- Confusion regarding chain of command.
- Fatigue, sleeplessness, helplessness, depression, lessened effectiveness, and/or frustration.

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