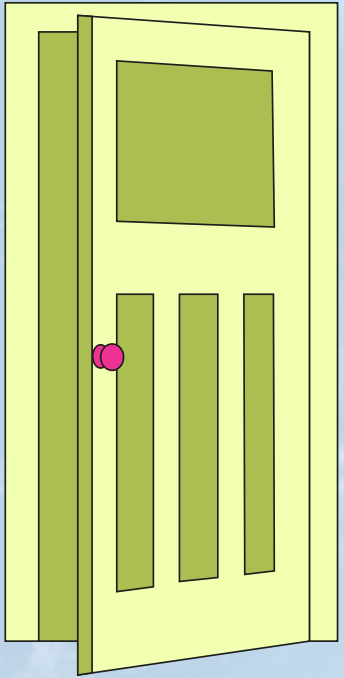




Mental Health & Hurricanes

1



Have a safe space ready for use. This can be a place to evacuate to or even just a large closet to clean out and spruce up in advance of the season. Having a closet you can empty completely in the days before a storm is a great option. You can toss some flashlights and pillows in there in advance. Having a space prepared can help us feel protected and less vulnerable.

2

Have a reliable way to get factual/timely information and stick to that. There is no need to watch the news 24/7 when a storm is forming, as this can raise anxiety levels by highlighting unknowns, rapid changes, and speculations. You can get periodic updates at specific times throughout the day (from reliable sources) and be just as prepared. Ensure that your phone is charged and equipped to receive emergency updates.



5

Plan some fun "storm" activities for children. Consider having a special board game or card game that stays unopened until the storm comes. Google or consult Pinterest for fun camping activities. Consider having a campout in the living room, even if it isn't necessary from a safety standpoint.



6



If you live alone, consider "evacuating" to the house of a friend or family member, even if it's close by and may not be entirely necessary from a physical safety standpoint. Riding out storms in the company of other people can reduce anxiety.

7

If you are taking medications for physical and/or mental health issues, check how close you are to needing a refill. You may want to refill it before the storm comes in case the pharmacy is closed for a few days. If your rx does not allow for early refills, talk to your doctor about your concerns.



3



Have a way to store/prepare/eat healthy and nutrient rich foods. It's tempting to load up on cookies and salty snacks, but granola and canned fruits/veggies can be a much better option. Check out camping gear for small power sources and small appliances. Having healthy foods can help stabilize mood and energy.

8



Consider your plans for the wake of the storm. After a storm, you may experience emotions such as stress, anxiety, uneasiness, and even depression. These feelings can be a normal response and you do not have to ignore them. If repairs and/or cleanup are needed, take it one step at a time and focus on what things you can control. Practice self-care and honor your emotional needs, even if they are different than someone else's. Ask for help. Both professional help and social supports are available.

4

When a storm is coming, clean and do laundry/dishes. If you lose power, the longer things take to smell bad can delay our feelings of overwhelm.

