Hurricane Ida is a reminder of how natural disasters have a significant impact on our lives in many ways. This message will focus on the emotional impact.

Trauma is defined in different ways, but commonly there is an emotional response to a deeply distressing and disturbing event. Some experts argue trauma is not rooted in the specific event but by our reaction to the event. Beyond semantics, we can all agree trauma has a significant impact on our daily lives and functioning.

Natural disasters are particularly challenging given so many people are impacted at once. Some folks experience the disaster on the ground, living through the experience. Others are closely connected to the place and people impacted, but at a different location at the time of the event. While some may not have any connection at all, the current stories, updates, and pictures may trigger memories or create an overwhelming sense of empathy. Hurricane Ida may be the most recent example, but the US is also experiencing significant damage by fires raging across California and the Northwest.

Given the ongoing pandemic, start of the academic year and what is a time of adjustment, we understand how even small changes in your regular functioning can have a big impact. The Wellness Center wants you to recognize common symptoms associated with trauma and distress in the aftermath of these catastrophic events.

- Mood swings including irritability
- Having limited feelings or feeling numb
- Increased nervousness leading to elevated anxiety
- Low mood including sadness, crying and decreased motivation/energy
- Trouble concentrating/retaining information
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Interpersonal relationship changes such as a desire to withdraw from others
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, or chest tightness/pain
- Using alcohol, tobacco, recreation, or prescription drugs to cope

The Wellness Center also wants to share healthy coping strategies to limit the impact of these symptoms you may be experiencing as a result of traumatic events.

- Remind yourself it is common to have different feelings and reactions after a distressing event
- Make an effort to eat, hydrate, and exercise to whatever level you are able to manage
- Consider healthy ways you enjoy relaxing, restoring, and lowering stress levels – what worked in the past?
- Try and limit exposure to social and other media coverage of the disaster
- Stay connected to your support systems to receive and give support.
- Know LUC resources available to you on campus. You are not alone here.
- Asking for help can be difficult but receiving help in a timely manner is important.

The Wellness Center offers an array of services for students struggling with elevated stress/distress symptoms. We have medical professionals to answer questions about physical symptoms. We have mental health clinicians to process what you are experiencing in time limited individual therapy. We offer a variety of group therapy options to meet a wide variety of needs and don’t forget about our therapy dog, Ashlar! All this information and more is available on our website: www.luc.edu/wellness.