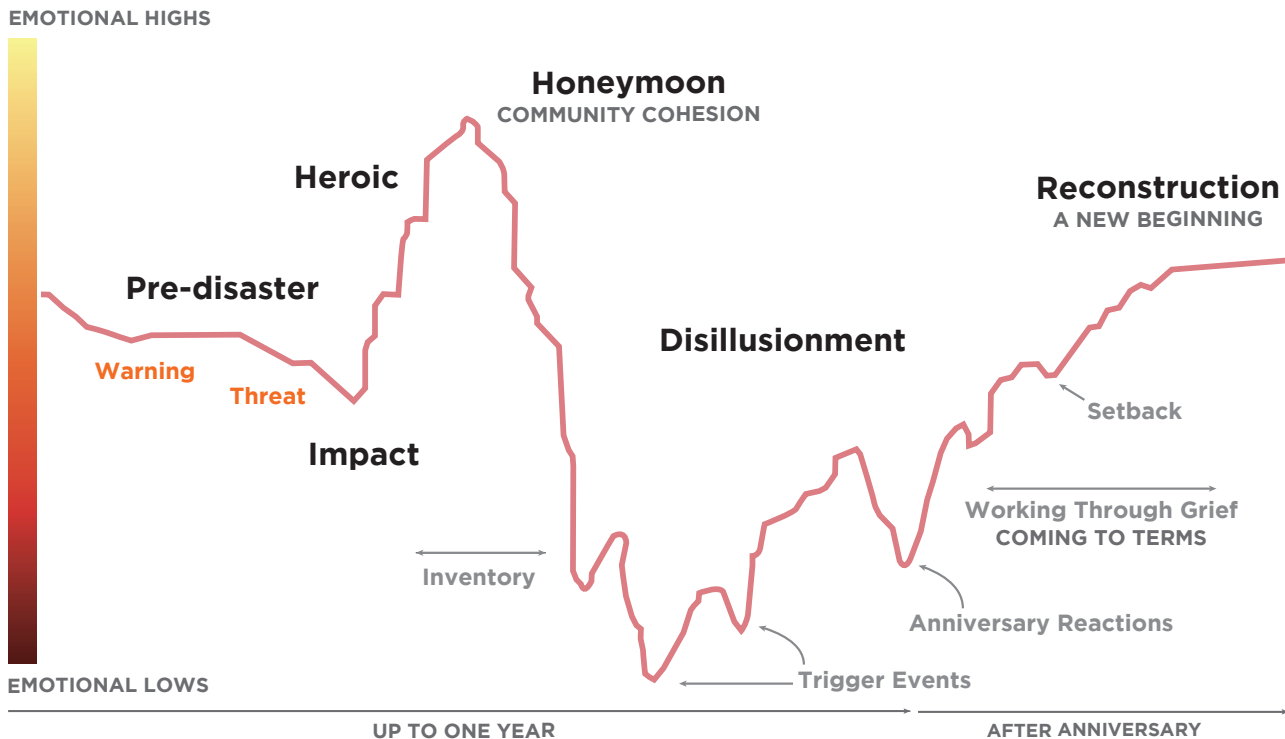




Phases of Disaster



Source: Zunin/Meyers, as cited in Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000).

This theoretical model, developed by Zunin and Myers in California, outlines the emotional phases of disaster recovery experienced by many communities.

1 Pre-disaster Phase

Disasters with no warning can cause feelings of vulnerability, fear of the future, lack of security, and loss of control. Disasters with warning can cause guilt or self-blame for failure to heed warnings.

2 Impact Phase

Reactions can range from shock to overt panic. Initial confusion and disbelief are followed by a focus on self-preservation and family protection. This is usually the shortest of the six phases.

3 Heroic Phase

Many survivors exhibit adrenaline-induced rescue behavior, high activity, and low productivity. Risk assessment may be impaired. There is a sense of altruism during this phase.

4 Honeymoon Phase

Community bonding occurs. Disaster assistance is readily available. Many are optimistic that all will return to normal. This phase is usually brief.

5 Disillusionment Phase

Stress and fatigue take a toll. Optimism turns into discouragement. Need for mental health and substance abuse services may increase. Larger community returns to business as usual.

6 Reconstruction: A New Beginning

Individuals and communities begin to assume responsibility for rebuilding their lives. People begin adjusting to new circumstances. There is a recognition of growth and opportunity.