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SOME MAY STRUGGLE WITH IMAGES FROM HAITI EARTHQUAKE

WHITFIELD— The images and stories from the Haiti earthquake aftermath have dominated the news ever since the disaster rocked the country on Tuesday. Many may be struggling to cope from a distance or are having trouble dealing with the images of the tragedy.

Dr. Pat Alexander, director of Psychological Services at Mississippi State Hospital, said that for many, the news coverage may be bringing back memories of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama in 2005.

“The Haitian disaster may cause some people who were victims of Katrina to have some discomfort,” Alexander said. “Problems with sleep, irritability, anxiety, and worrying about the future would not be uncommon, especially if they are watching the images on television or the computer on a frequent basis.”

The American Psychological Association has a free resource center online for those who may be managing stress or trying to recover from another disaster. It can be found at www.apa.org/helpcenter, and offers tips for those living here who have either lost loved ones in the disaster or are still waiting to hear news of them.

Alexander said some people may need to seek counseling to help deal with their grief. One very important thing they could do is try to take part in some of the ongoing relief efforts.

“The important thing is to try to use their discomfort in a positive manner by finding a way to help others in distress,” she said. “This can be done directly to the agencies helping those in Haiti or by helping local agencies who always need volunteers.”

The APA’s Help Center also notes that finding a way to help would be productive. Other tips it gives are:

- **Take a news break** - Watching constant footage of the disaster can increase stress. This doesn’t mean not to stay informed, but taking a break can lessen distress.
- **Control what you can** – Continue your daily routines, like going to work and school. It helps to keep you from constantly thinking about the earthquake.

- **Keep things in perspective** – Remember that you still have good in your life, and can get through challenges you may be facing.

For additional information on managing traumatic stress in the aftermath of disasters, visit www.apa.org/helpcenter. And follow the APA Help Center at www.twitter.com/APAHelpCenter and read APA's Mind/Body Health campaign blog, www.yourmindyourbody.org.

MSH, a facility of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, was founded in 1855 and facilitates improvement in the quality of life for Mississippians who are in need of mental health, chemical dependency or nursing home services, by rehabilitating to the least restrictive environment, utilizing a range of psychiatric and medical services, which reflect the accepted standard of care and are in compliance with statutory and regulatory guidelines. The hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission.

- 30 -

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