

Rädda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden), Röda Korset (Red Cross Sweden) and Svenska kyrkan (the Church of Sweden) work together to provide support for people in refugee situations.

**Save the Children** is a politically and religiously independent organisation promoting the rights of children. Since the foundation of our organisation almost 100 years ago, one important part of our activities has been to provide support to children who are refugees. We have representatives to support refugees every step of the way – in war zones, along refugee routes and at home in Sweden. We work hard to produce sustainable and long-term change.

**Red Cross** is the world's foremost organisation involved in catastrophe management. Every day, we work with crises, catastrophes and conflicts all over the world. Our workforce is made up of millions of volunteers who are on site before, during and after a catastrophe in order to help others. Our workers can be found along the entire length of refugee routes. By making use of local knowledge and compassion, we fight to ensure nobody is left alone in a catastrophe.

**Church of Sweden** is the largest religious community in Sweden, with 6.3 million members and more than 3000 churches throughout Sweden. Our parishes in Sweden help provide human support and solidarity. An important part of the christian identity is to welcome everyone regardless of background or religion. As part of a worldwide fellowship, the task of the Church of Sweden's international work is to participate in positive change together with and for people who live in vulnerable situations around the world.

Photo: Alex och Martin/IKON

# If you are new in Sweden

– how to help yourself and others

For more information



Being forced to leave your home country and finding yourself in a completely new situation is a huge challenge, and can cause a lot of stress. Below are examples of common reactions, and things you can do to help yourself and others.

## COMMON REACTIONS TO A STRESSFUL SITUATION

**Emotional:**  
Anxiety and fear – immense grief – denial  
– doubt – hopelessness – loneliness – loss  
of control over your emotions – despair  
– hypersensitivity – anger – relief – joy and  
decisiveness.

**Physical:**  
Strength and energy – fatigue – pains in  
your chest – difficulties breathing – heart  
palpitations – feeling physically weak  
– different types of physical pain.

## Behavioural:

Increased or decreased appetite – risk of  
increase in smoking, drinking alcohol,  
taking drugs and medication or working  
out – difficulties sleeping or inability  
to rest – selfish or aggressive behaviour  
– behaviour that is either exaggeratedly  
social or, on the contrary, where you  
avoid others.

## Intellectually:

Difficulty making decisions, concentrating  
information and concentrating  
– learning difficulties – problems with  
memory.

## All the above reactions

- are common in a stressful situation and can affect everyone and anyone.
- can emerge at different periods of time (immediately after or days to months later).
- can last for several days to months, or even longer. This all depends on the level of stress to which you have been exposed.

- Lessens as you become more confident.
- Get help from your local health care center if you are worried about your own reactions or of someone in your family. They will work out how to help and offer counselling and medical care. It can be alleviated by being met with understanding, care and support.

## HELP YOURSELF AND OTHERS

1. Remember that it is perfectly natural to feel sad if you have lost friends or family or the life you had. It is also important to allow your children to grieve.
2. Even if you find it impossible to gain control of your current situation, remember that it always helps to establish a number of daily routines that you decide about yourself.
3. Be kind to yourself and remember how many problems you have already dealt with.
4. Support your relatives, friends and other people you meet.
5. Remember that the people around you are also affected by the situation.
6. Help others by, for example, taking part in voluntary activities.
7. Try out new activities. At the same time, find relief in the familiar, for example music, food and TV from your home country.
8. Take the time to rest and recover.

- Meet other people every day.
- Seek activities and situations that you like, for example sports clubs, cafes and spiritual places.

- Take the time to reflect alone if this gives you a feeling of inner peace.
- Remember to keep a balance between activity and rest.
- 9. Your health is important, keep it in mind.
  - Avoid drinking too much coffee or tea.
  - Keep active, for example by going for walks. This helps reduce stress.
  - Eat regular and varied meals.
- 10. Keep up any spiritual activities that make you feel better, such as praying, etc.
  - Keep your family together, as far as is possible.
  - Set aside time for the family and make sure all the family members take part in discussions about what has happened and about the future.

## HELP YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

- Find a way if possible to carry out the activities you normally did as a family before the crisis, such as family meals, prayer or popular pastimes.
- Also try to find new ways of paying attention to each other.

## HELP CHILDREN CLOSE TO YOU

- When your child asks questions, provide answers that are as simple and specific as possible. Do not provide them with too much adult information, and remember that it is important to distinguish between your own feelings and those of your children.
- Let them know that there are adults who are working hard to make things better for them, and allow your children to have faith in the adult world. This faith is developed when the adults close to a child are honest, but at the same time avoid frightening the child by providing more information than the child can handle with a view to the child's maturity or the questions the child has asked. It is therefore important to listen to your children's questions, even those questions that are not spoken. You may find that a child will ask questions in another way, for example during play.
- The most important thing you as a parent or important adult can do when a child is anxious is to communicate calm and security, and not to transfer an excessive amount of your anxiety to the child. When adults react with anxiety, for example to difficult images on the TV, this reaction may have a stronger impact on a child than the actual images on the TV.
- An anxious child may need extra affection and care. Allow for and meet your children's needs when they for example want to sit on your lap or some other form of affection.