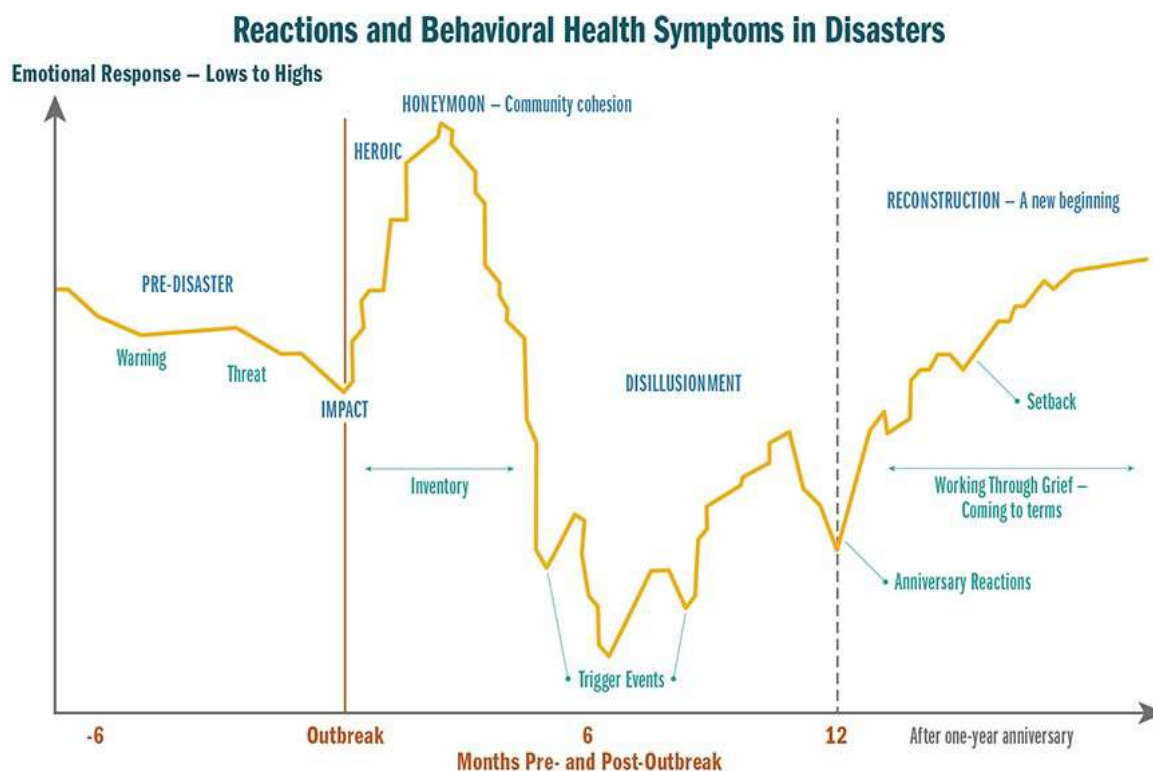


## Understanding the Emotional Responses to Disaster

One model that may be helpful in providing wisdom here closely resembles the Kubler Ross Cycle of Grief, is based on the work of Zunin and Myers in 1990. The model Phases of Collective Trauma, cited in DeWolfe D J 2000, Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters, provides an insight into the possible responses and timeline for recovery and rebuilding. The model below has been adapted to reflect the current pandemic crisis. (Washington State House Democrats)



In the different phases of the disaster, people experience a range of emotions and responses. In the early stages there is often a heroic response, acts of selflessness and an appreciation of those that step up to respond. This is accompanied by a rush of adrenalin that drives people to respond to the urgency of the situation. This response is followed by the honeymoon where communities pull together to act, and we saw that in the clap for carers and volunteering in the early months of the pandemic.

As time passes there is a natural 'inventory' or reality period where people realise their limits and understand the impact of the disaster. This also is the start of the disillusionment phase during which people begin to experience both physical and emotional weariness. Grief and anxiety as well as lethargy and a feeling of helplessness can occur. During this time there may be specific trigger events such as anniversaries that compound the sense of grief.

Eventually we move to the reconstruction phase when there are new beginnings and a new normal is created. This process is often bumpy with setbacks, people need to be able to work through their grief, to lament and to come to terms with what has been lost. As they do, living with both awareness of loss and hope for the future can coexist. It is now people can move forward to retore and rebuild. Sometimes referred to as the wiser living phase, during which there is an

acknowledgement that what has occurred has changed the community in lasting ways. Healing can happen but there will be scars and wounds that continue.

This model reflects the Kubler Ross cycle of grief but seeks to explain a collective or community experience that comes about by everyone experiencing a disaster. It does not assume that everyone will experience the same emotions at the same time, and we need to acknowledge that although everyone has experienced the pandemic, we have all experienced it differently. Our own journey through the phases will be marked by our personal experiences and of those immediately around us.

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