



## 5 Ps for Peace Before, During, and After a Disaster

By Dr Lauren Vinnell, Massey University for Psychology Week 13 – 19 May 2024

Aotearoa is a beautiful country, in large part thanks to our active geology and (relatively!) temperate weather. While nature sometimes presents us with a challenge, there are plenty of steps you can take to be better prepared for those challenges. Whether it's weather or earthquakes or something else, these steps below are examples of things you can do to be safer and feel less anxious about some of our natural risks.

### 1. Peruse


You can't prepare for something if you don't know anything about it except for the fact that it exists. It's important to know what natural hazards you may have in the areas in which you live, work, and play so that you know what specific actions you can take to be more ready for them. This can also help you avoid worrying about things you don't need to worry about, or worrying more than you need to. "Peruse" may seem like an odd name for this point, but there's a reason for it! Knowledge is power, but if you can, just learn what you need to so that you can make a plan and get prepared. For example, it's important to know that tsunamis are serious business, but watching endless videos of them destroying buildings probably won't help you feel less anxious. And remember while you're learning about your local hazards and how they might impact you, that there's *always* steps you can take to be better prepared.

To learn more about your natural hazard risk, and in particular what you might expect where you live, the EQC Toka Tū Ake Natural Hazards Portal is a great place to start: <https://www.naturalhazardsportal.govt.nz/s/>

### 2. Plan

One of the most stressful aspects of a disaster is worrying about family/friends/loved ones and trying to get reconnected if you're separated. Take some time to sit with your family, whānau, household, friends, flatmates (anyone you'd want to know is safe and try to find after something major goes down) and make a plan. Where will you go, where will you meet, how will you contact each other? If you have kids at school, what plans does the school have in place? If they're going to evacuate, where are they going to go? Revisit your plan regularly or if something changes.

For some great ideas and guides on making a plan, visit: <https://getready.govt.nz/en/prepared/household/make-a-plan>



## Peace of Mind and Wellbeing Around Natural Disasters

### 3. Prepare

“Being prepared” is a bit misleading – we don’t tend to think of prepared in the sense of you are or you aren’t. There’s always more that can be done, but also every single step that you take to be better prepared *will* help in the event of a disaster (and probably make you feel better about things beforehand, too!). There’s a lot of steps that you can take to be better prepared which are easy and cheap or free – if you finish a large bottle of soft drink, give it a clean, fill it with water, and store it somewhere. Do a “household hazard hunt” (particularly great for kids, but good for adults too!) where you explore your home for things that might fall in an earthquake, and then secure or move them. Another great place to start is with things that will help you regardless of the emergency – having a battery-powered torch (don’t forget the batteries!) will help when you lose power whether that’s due to wind or an earthquake.

For other ideas to get prepared: <https://getready.govt.nz/en/prepared>

EQC Toka Tū Ake also have great advice on how to make your homes and buildings safer, whether you’re an owner, renter, or looking to buy: <https://www.eqc.govt.nz/be-prepared/>


### 4. Practice

Just like fire drills, we can practice what we will do in a natural hazard event like an earthquake or tsunami. One great initiative is the annual, national ShakeOut earthquake drill and tsunami hikoi, where at the same time on the same day hundreds of thousands of kiwis practice what to do during shaking (Drop, cover, and hold!) and then practice their evacuation route if they’re near the coast. We know that doing these drills can help you feel less afraid and be less likely to get injured during the real thing.

ShakeOut is happening again this October! If you want to feel more prepared for earthquakes (and tsunami) and reduce your chance of getting injured, you can sign up for the nationwide drill here: <https://getready.govt.nz/involved/shakeout>

### 5. Patience

After a natural hazard event, life will get pretty messy. Routines will be disrupted, you’ll probably feel pretty tired, scared, sad, and maybe angry. This can make it harder to make decisions and manage emotions. One of the most important things to remember in this situation is patience. It can be a lot to ask when bad stuff has happened, but if you can be patient with others *and with yourself*, you’ll hopefully be able to deal with everything a little bit better.



## Peace of Mind and Wellbeing Around Natural Disasters

The New Zealand Red Cross has a lot of experience supporting people and communities who have experienced a disaster or emergency, and they have some great advice on what you can do to look after yourself and those around you here: <https://www.redcross.org.nz/get-help/emergencies-and-disasters/caring-for-yourself-and-others/>

If you're currently experiencing distress related to a disaster, there are people who can help you. You can call or text 1737 any time, and there are dedicated services for rangatahi at <https://youthline.co.nz/> and <https://www.thelowdown.co.nz/>