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'Disaster Fatigue' Leads to Drop in Giving

'Disaster fatigue' blamed for a drop in giving after two major tragedies overseas

That's part of why Dave Morris, 34, has yet to open his checkbook — he's not sure he could really help.

Morris aims to give 10 percent of his income to causes such as public radio, the Red Cross and breast cancer. But the engineer from Ypsilanti, Mich., hasn't given to the relief efforts in Myanmar and China, in part because the world's problems seem impossibly large.

"If you thought about at this very second the number of people who were suffering and dying, I could dedicate all my resources to that and yet it would be a drop in the bucket," he says.

Still, experts in the field are optimistic that Americans may still come through for victims of these disasters. The Giving USA Foundation says companies are pledging relief funds for China, perhaps because so many do business there.

"I think we may also see a surge of donations for the China relief effort because of people's frustrations with the Myanmar government's resistance to the aid effort there," says Gerard Jacobs, director of the Disaster Mental Health Institute at University of South Dakota.

Jacobs was in Bangkok working with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center when the cyclone struck Myanmar, and he got word of the earthquake while in a meeting about helping governments in the region to respond to victims' psychological needs.

"People may feel a sense of relief that the China earthquake presents a situation where the public can genuinely make a difference," he says.

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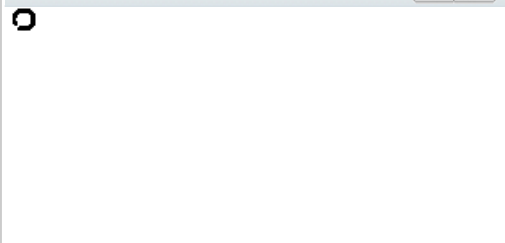
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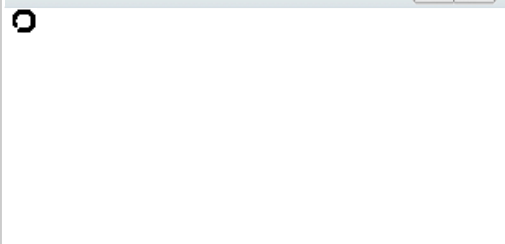


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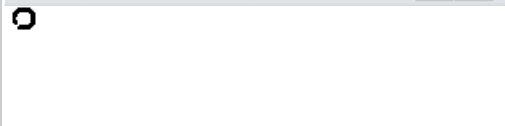
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