



Coping with a Traumatic Event

Reactions after a traumatic event or incident (natural or otherwise) may vary from person to person and community to community. However, common responses for victims and witnesses (or even those affected due to excessive media exposure) may often include:

- Sadness
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Irritability
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Disruption of sleep patterns
- A change in eating habits

There should be no shame, guilt, or judgment attached to these feelings or conditions. They are normal reactions to an abnormal experience.



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How to Help Yourself

There are many possible coping mechanisms to help you navigate your way through what can be a difficult and challenging period.

- **Share your feelings with those close to you** – at certain times just talking about the experience with a trusted friend or relative can help ease the burden.
- **Look after yourself** – make sure you get an appropriate amount of rest, exercise, and nutrition.
- **Embrace the familiar** – sometimes there is comfort and reassurance in old routines and habits. This can also apply to both home and work.

- **Explore different stress-relieving techniques** – many people find deep breathing techniques, yoga, meditation, journaling, or listening to music can have a calming, stress-reducing effect.
- **Avoid media coverage** – if it's possible to do so, take a break from any media (or social media) reminders of the event that may trigger anxiety.
- **Don't be afraid to ask** – if you need help, ask for it. People may think you're doing well or they may not feel comfortable offering help.

Remember, there is no set timetable for you to get over a traumatic event. Be patient; recognize and acknowledge what you are feeling and experiencing.

How to Help Others

If someone around you, whether it's a friend, family member, or workmate, is coping with a traumatic event, there are ways you can help and support them.

- **Be available** – reach out and let them know you're there if needed. Some people might want to talk, some might just want to sit in silence. Be there for them either way.
- **Be reassuring** – make it clear to your friend, loved one, or workmate that the way they're feeling and reacting is normal and understandable.
- **Share your own experience** – if you happen to have been through a traumatic experience of your own, your insights may be a source of comfort and encouragement.
- **Extend an invitation** – if there is an event/ceremony to remember or aid victims of the tragedy, inviting your friend, loved one, or workmate may be a way to help them combat emotional isolation and be around people dealing with the same issues as them.

Whether it's yourself or someone you know who is coping with a traumatic event, it's always good to be aware of specific days or milestones that might trigger heightened feelings of anxiety or sadness. Be sensitive to the impact events like birthdays or anniversaries involving lost loved ones, or other significant dates attached to the incident may have.

Again, whether it's yourself or someone you know who is coping with a traumatic event, it's also important to know that a variety of professional help is available if needed.

That help may come from a counselor or a therapist, but no one has to struggle alone.