

Tips for Self-Care Following A Trauma

Adapted from a National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet by LSU Health Sciences Center - New Orleans



Common reactions to traumatic events and disasters include:

- New or renewed fears, sadness, helplessness, anger.
- Feeling overwhelmed, confused, distracted, emotionally numb, or disoriented.
- Nightmares or upsetting thoughts and images that come to mind.
- Young children may be upset, distracted, or feel out of sorts.

These are normal reactions to very stressful events. With the help of family and friends, most people gradually feel better as time goes by.

What can people do to cope?

- Spend time with other people. Resist the tendency to isolate yourself from your known supports, such as trusted friends and family.
- If it helps, talk about how you are feeling. Use judgment about whether you feel able to listen to others who need to talk.
- Get back to your everyday routines. Familiar habits can be very comforting.
- Take time to grieve and cry. Letting these feelings out will help them to pass.
- Take small, doable steps toward tackling big problems. Take one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
- Try to eat healthy food at regular meal times.
- Take time to walk, stretch, exercise, and relax, even if just for a few minutes at a time. Get enough rest and sleep.
- Do something that just feels good to you like taking a warm bath, or taking a walk.
- Take breaks from the stress of the event. Turn off the TV news reports and do something you enjoy.

What can adults do to help children cope?

- Let them know you understand their feelings.
- Truthfully reassure them that they are safe.
- As much as possible maintain their usual routines (e.g., nap and bed times, etc.)
- Do not expose them to frightening images and discussions of the events including news programs, newspapers or discussions of adult concerns.)
- Speak to children in simple, reassuring terms about the disaster. Remember they will be concerned primarily about the safety of their home, their possessions, their friends, school, etc.

When should a person seek more help?

Other people may need extra help coping if a month after the traumatic event he/she:

- Still feels very upset or fearful most of the time
- Acts very differently compared to before the trauma
- Can't work or take care of kids or home
- Has problems with important relationships that are continuing to get worse since the traumatic event
- Uses drugs or drinks significantly more than before the disaster
- Feels jumpy or has ongoing nightmares
- Has flashbacks about the disaster
- Remains unable to enjoy life