

Tips for Survivors of a Traumatic Event

Managing Your Stress



Know When to Get Help

Sometimes things become so overwhelming that you need help from a mental health or substance abuse professional. If you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him/herself or another person; looks for ways to kill him/herself; talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide; feels rage, uncontrolled anger, or desires revenge; or shows signs of stress (listed on this page) for several days or weeks, GET HELP by calling one of the hotlines listed on the next page.

What You Should Know

When you are exposed to traumatic events, such as natural disaster, mass violence, or terrorism, be aware of how these events can affect you personally. Most people show signs of stress after the event. These signs are normal. Over time, as your life gets back to normal, they should decrease. After a stressful event, monitor your own physical and mental health. Know the signs of stress in yourself and your loved ones. Know how to relieve stress. And know when to get help.

- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun.

Your Body:

- Having stomach aches or diarrhea.
- Having headaches and other pains.
- Losing your appetite or eating too much.
- Sweating or having chills.
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches.
- Being easily startled.

Know the Signs of Stress

Your Behavior:

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels.
- An increase in your alcohol, tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs.
- An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing.
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping.
- Crying frequently.
- Worrying excessively.
- Wanting to be alone most of the time.
- Blaming other people for everything.
- Having difficulty communicating or listening.
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help.

Your Emotions:

- Being anxious or fearful.
- Feeling depressed.
- Feeling guilty.
- Feeling angry.
- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable.
- Not caring about anything.
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness.

Your Thinking:

- Having trouble remembering things.
- Feeling confused.
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating.
- Having difficulty making decisions.



Helpful Resources

National Mental Health Information Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-789-2647 (English and Español)

TDD: 1-866-889-2647

Web Site: www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

Toll-Free: 1-800-729-6686 (English and Español)

TDD: 1-800-487-4889

Web Site: www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

Treatment Locators

Mental Health Services Locator

Toll-Free: 1-800-789-2647 (English and Español)

TDD: 1-866-889-2647

Web Site: www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (4357) (24/7 English and Español)

TDD: 1-800-487-4889

Web Site: www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Web Site: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Workplace Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-WORKPLACE (967-5752)

Web Site: <http://dwp.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.aspx>

Office for Victims of Crime

Toll-Free: 1-800-851-3420

TTY: 1-877-712-9279

Web Site: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html

Note: Inclusion of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Know How To Relieve Stress

You can manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.

Keep Yourself Healthy:

- Eat healthy foods, and drink water.
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Get physical exercise.

Use Practical Ways To Relax:

- Relax your body often by things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, wash your face and hands, or engage in pleasurable hobbies.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task.
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, or talk to family.
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often.

Pay Attention to Your Body, Feelings, and Spirit:

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of handling this event, and think of how you handled past events.
- Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common after a traumatic event.
- Connect with other survivors of traumatic events or violent crime, many of whom may experience similar difficulties.
- Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer, or helping others in need.

Have a Plan To Manage Your Tasks:

Do the important things first. If necessary, find a safe place to stay. Tell family where you are and how they can contact you. Get water and food. If needed, get papers for your property, insurance, bank, medical records, and job qualifications from agencies if you lost them in the traumatic event. It may take time to feel like you've regained control over your life. Be patient with yourself and others.