



Coping with Traumatic Events

If you turn on the TV, pick up a newspaper or go on the internet, you'll likely find the news is full of negative stories, including tragic events. Some tragedies involve unthinkable acts of violence, which can be difficult to understand. When violence strikes closer to home — like in your community — it may be even harder to process.

While people may process violence in different ways, there are several tools you can use to help build your resiliency skill set in the face of tragedy.

Start a dialogue.

Finding people to talk to is one simple way to help process violence. Reach out to friends or family for support. If there are others who have been through the same experience, you may wish to connect with them. While people deal with a tragedy differently, speaking with others who've been through what you have can help validate your feelings — and remind you you're not alone.

Choose when to connect.

While the internet, TV and social media can be great information sources, try to avoid information overload. Taking in too much coverage of a negative event may cause additional stress. "Unplugging" from media coverage may give you the time you need to focus on important things — like your health, stress management and finding ways to cope beyond the event.

Change your perspective.

Another reason you may wish to unplug from media is because it may be easier for you to refocus your thoughts. Choose to focus on what's positive in your life. And try to find something you've learned from the negative experience. This may help you gain a broader perspective outside of the current situation.

Focus on your feelings.

Focusing on yourself is critical to processing a negative event — and the negative emotions that may come with it. Try to get in touch with what you're feeling. It's normal to experience different emotions after a tragedy, and you may move through several feelings over time. From shock or sorrow to fear or anger, acknowledge your feelings as they occur to you. Self-awareness is an important first step to learning to manage your feelings.

Pay attention to your health.

Remember that taking care of yourself isn't selfish. Don't forget the importance of exercising regularly, choosing a healthy diet, getting good sleep and avoiding bad habits, like smoking or excessive alcohol use. Try stress-relieving techniques like practicing meditation or yoga.

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