

# TIPS FOR SURVIVORS OF A TRAUMATIC EVENT: MANAGING YOUR STRESS

## KNOW THE SIGNS OF STRESS.

### 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 when to get help.

### YOUR BEHAVIOR.

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in your alcohol or tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs
- An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
- Difficulty with relaxing or sleeping
- Frequent crying
- Placing of blame on other people for everything
- Difficulty with communicating or listening
- Difficulty with giving or accepting help

### 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

### YOUR EMOTIONS.

- Being anxious or fearful
- Experiencing an inability to feel pleasure or have fun
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling angry
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- 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
- Worrying excessively
- Having difficulty making decisions

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## KNOW HOW TO RELIEVE STRESS.

### 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 doing the things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, engage in pleasurable hobbies, or even do something as simple as washing your face and hands.
- 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.

### YOU CAN MANAGE AND ALLEVIATE YOUR STRESS BY TAKING TIME TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

### 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. Focus on the ways you handled them well.
- Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common after a traumatic event.
- Connect with other survivors of traumatic events or violent crimes, 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 have regained control over your life. Be patient with yourself and others.



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