



# Brief Tips about Self-Care and Self-Help Following Disasters

## A National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet

The emotional effects of the recent terrorist attacks will be felt by people everywhere: victims, bereaved family members, friends, rescue workers, emergency medical care providers, mental-health care providers, witnesses to the event, volunteers, members of the media, and citizens of the community, the country, and the world. Those who were at the scene and those who have lost loved ones will almost certainly have strong reactions. People who saw or heard about the attacks on TV may also have strong reactions.

**Common reactions to traumatic events** like the terrorist attack include feeling afraid, sad, horrified, helpless, angry, overwhelmed, confused, distracted, emotionally numb, or disoriented. People may also be bothered by 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. Coping with stressful events is easier when people support each other.
- If it helps, talk about how you are feeling. Be willing to listen to others who need to talk about how they feel.
- Get back to your everyday routines. Familiar habits can be very comforting.
- Take time to grieve and cry if you need to. To feel better in the long run, you need to let these feelings out instead of pushing them away or hiding them.
- Ask for support and help from your family, friends, church, or other community resources. Join or develop support groups.
- Set small goals to tackle big problems. Take one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
- Eat healthy food and take time to walk, stretch, exercise, and relax, even if just for a few minutes at a time.
- Make sure you get enough rest and sleep. People often need more sleep than usual when they are very stressed.
- Do something that just feels good to you like taking a warm bath, taking a walk, sitting in the sun, or petting your cat or dog.
- If you are trying to do too much, try to cut back by putting off or giving up a few things that are not absolutely necessary.
- Find something positive you can do. Give blood. Donate money to help victims of the attack. Join efforts in your community to respond to this tragedy.
- Get away from the stress of the event sometimes. Turn off the TV news reports and distract yourself by doing something you enjoy.

## What can adults do to help children cope?

- Let them know you understand their feelings.

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- Tell them that they really are safe.
- Keep to your usual routines.
- Keep them from seeing too many frightening pictures of the events.
- Educate yourself about [how to talk to children](#) of different ages about trauma.

## When should a person seek more help?

Sometimes people need extra help to deal with a traumatic event. People directly affected by this tragedy, young children, people who have been through other traumatic events, and people with emotional problems are more likely to need professional help. A person may need extra help coping if a month after the attack he or 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 important relationships that are continuing to get worse
- Uses drugs or drinks too much
- Feels jumpy or has nightmares a lot
- Still can't stop thinking about the attack
- Still can't enjoy life at all

## Where can one go to get help?

Listed below are some ways to find help. When you call, tell whomever you speak to that you are trying to find a mental-health provider who specializes in helping people who have been through traumatic events and/or who have lost loved ones. Check this website regularly for updated information on how to get help. We will be listing more ways to get help as they become available.

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### Most Popular Pages:

- What is PTSD?
- Treatment
- Assessment
- Effects
- Veterans
- Children
- Coping
- Seeking Help
- Help for Veterans
- Overview of PTSD
- Epidemiological
- Children-Disaster
- Children-Sexual Abuse
- Family
- Disasters/Effects

### For veterans

VA medical centers and Vet Centers provide veterans with mental-health services that health insurance will cover or that costs little or nothing, according to a veteran's ability to pay. VA medical centers and Vet Centers are listed in the phone book in the blue Government pages. Under "United States Government Offices," look in the section for "Veterans Affairs, Dept of." In that section look for VA Medical Centers and Clinics listed under "Medical Care" and for "Vet Centers — Counseling and Guidance," and call the one nearest to where you live. On the Internet, go to [www.va.gov/](http://www.va.gov/) and look for the VHA Facilities Locator link under "Health Benefits and Services," or go to [www.va.gov/rcs](http://www.va.gov/rcs).

### For non-veterans

Some local mental-health services are listed in the phone book in the blue Government pages. In the "County Government Offices" section for the county where you live, look for a "Health Services (Dept. of)" or "Department of Health Services" section. In that section, look for listings under "Mental Health." In the yellow pages, services and mental-health professionals are listed under



"counseling," "psychologists," "social workers," "psychotherapists," "social and human services," or "mental health." Health insurance may pay for mental-health services and some are available at low cost according to your ability to pay.

### **For anyone**

Call your doctor's office or ask friends if they can recommend any mental-health providers.

If you work for a large company or organization, call the Human Resources or Personnel office to find out if they provide mental-health services or make referrals.

If you are a member of a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), call to find out if mental-health services are available.

Call the National Center for Victims of Crime's toll-free information and referral service at 1-800-FYI-CALL. This is a comprehensive database of more than 6,700 community service agencies throughout the country that directly support victims of crime.

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For more information call the PTSD Information Line at (802) 296-6300 or send email to [ncptsd@ncptsd.org](mailto:ncptsd@ncptsd.org). This page was last updated on Fri Sep 13 14:41:51 2002.