



Center for Student Health & Counseling
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Coping with Stress & Traumatic Events

A stressful or traumatic event may be personal, such as a loss of someone you care about, or community-wide, such as a fire on campus. Examples of trauma situations can include deaths, natural disasters, violence crime, sexual assault and abuse, the aftermath of a suicide, threats to public health (e.g., COVID19), or campus or domestic violence. It is important to understand potential reactions to stressful or traumatic events, as well as coping strategies and ways to seek additional support when needed.

There is no “right” way to react to a traumatic event. They vary from person to person. Some individuals may be indirectly impacted by traumatic events. Reactions may include, but are not limited to:

Emotion Responses

- Shock or denial
- Anger or irritability
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Depression
- Hypervigilance
- Heightened fear and anxiety
- Mood changes
- Numbness
- Guilt
- Grief

Cognitive Responses

- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Dreams or nightmares of the event
- Confusion
- “Flashbacks” of crisis event
- Self-doubt

Behavioral Responses

- Hyperactivity or Restlessness
- Difficult sleeping
- Social withdrawal

- Avoidance
- Loss of Appetite
- Insomnia
- Increased alcohol or drug use

Physical Responses

- Headaches
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Trembling

Coping with stressful or traumatic events:

- Validate your emotions. Recognize and accept that your feelings are “normal” responses to extreme circumstances.
- Reach out and make contact with others. Send a text or IM to a friend or family member. Reach out to others in the community.
- Attend an online event focused on connection in difficult circumstances or focused on managing stress
- Keep a journal
- Maintain your schedule or create a routine as much as you can
- Get rest and set aside time to relax
- Eat regular balanced meals
- Exercise or participate in physical activity. There are a number of trauma-informed yoga therapists that provide online videos.
- Practice sleep hygiene techniques to help with falling and staying asleep.
- If possible, go for a walk outside or engage in activity, such as finishing a puzzle, reading a book, meditating, listening to music.
- Be patient and kind to yourself. It takes time to recover from a traumatic event. Everyone reacts differently. Practice compassion for yourself and others when needed.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol or drugs.
- Consider contacting Student Health and Counseling Services at 503-725-2800 for additional mental health support if symptoms persist.

Additional Resources:

- Disaster Distress Helpline (SAMHSA) 1-800-985-5990 or Text “TalkWithUs” to 66746
- [SAMHSA Recommendations on Physical Distancing](#)
- [SAMHSA Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Traumatic Event: What to Expect in Your Personal, Family, Work, and Financial Life](#)
- [Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Managing Stress](#)
- [Radical Healing in Times of Fear and Uncertainty](#) Protip: click through all the links in the article.