

Experiencing Disruptive Events

Recovery and Coping Strategies



In response to the recent social unrest taking place throughout the United States and around the world, you may experience or observe various reactions levels of reactions. You may become preoccupied with your safety, feel distracted, or feel less productive.

Each individual will react differently and uniquely as events unfold. Reactions will depend on your exposure to the event and how directly or personally affected you are. All of these factors, and your life experiences can result in varying reactions.

These events may result in traumatic experiences depending on whether your emotional impact has been significant. The combination of the event itself and the magnitude of social reactions coupled with its unpredictability, will often lead to an intense feeling of vulnerability for our own safety and the safety of others.

What are possible reactions?

Following stressful events, your reactions can range from feeling mildly unsettled to appearing distressed, shaken and possibly anxious. You may exhibit physical responses such as numbness and shock. Others may exhibit clearly observable reactions and may need support to facilitate their recovery.

Even after difficult incidents, people are generally resilient and adverse reactions will usually be temporary for most individuals. You may require limited support, while others will need more assistance and a brief adjustment period to overcome their reactions.

Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.

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Some of the more common reactions you may experience could include:

- Overwhelming feelings that may become unpredictable – you may feel shaken up, fearful, anxious, irritable, easily startled and experience mood swings;
- Headaches, muscle tension, nausea, gastrointestinal symptoms and fatigue;
- Intrusive and recurring unpleasant images, that may also be accompanied by physiological reactions such as sweating and rapid heartbeat;
- Difficulties concentrating, making decisions or becoming easily disoriented;
- Moderate to major disruption with your sleeping and eating patterns;
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated, avoiding others and disengaging from normal life activities.

What can you do to take care of yourself?

- Engage in calming self-talk, minimize negative thoughts and preserve your balance as much as possible.
- Prioritize all personal safety and health needs.
- Actively seek the support of others who care about you by reaching out and talking with colleagues, family and friends.
- Communicate your experience in whatever way feels comfortable; inform those close to you of what would be most helpful to you during this difficult time.
- Take good care of yourself by eating at regular intervals, obtaining as much rest and sleep as you can.

- Resume normal routines as quickly as possible.
- Stay active and engage in light exercise even though it may be difficult.
- Listen attentively to your body's needs and always follow your instincts regarding personal self-care.
- Attempt to restore your own sense of personal control and self-confidence in your ability to manage this crisis. In this way, you can also help others in need of your support.
- Be mindful of your social media exposure and online content sharing that may be triggers for you and the people you care about.

Remember...

Grieving, overcoming anxiety and managing your reactions may take time, and this time can vary from one person to another. Recognize that people are inherently resilient; that we all have the ability to cope with difficult, stressful life experiences. Individuals who take good care of themselves and who obtain professional support (if and when needed) will experience diminished symptoms and recover over time.

If you or a colleague continue to experience significant distress, difficulty coping caused by the aftermath of such events, please contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Sometimes just talking to an EFAP professional can help you regain a healthy perspective and improve your ability to cope with disruptive and challenging events.

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