



## Coping With Traumatic Events

It is normal to feel afraid, vulnerable or helpless after witnessing or experiencing traumatic events. While family and friends can help us cope, sometimes additional support is needed.

### What to Expect

Soon after a traumatic event, stress may briefly affect how you feel, think and act. Immediate stress reactions should lessen and disappear with time. When stress reactions linger or interfere with functioning, you may need professional support.

### Common Stress Reactions

People react to stress differently. There is no right or wrong way to react to stress. Some common stress reactions include:

**Physical:** Feeling exhausted. Having trouble with sleeping and eating. Experiencing headaches, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, chills, sweating, or a worsening of existing medical conditions.

**Emotional:** Experiencing strong emotions including shock, disbelief, loneliness, sorrow, numbness, fear and anger.

**Behavioral:** Not acting “like you.” Feeling restless and argumentative, hyperactive or withdrawn. Having emotional outbursts or conflicts at home and work.

**Thoughts:** Difficulties concentrating, remembering and making decisions.

**Spirituality:** Questioning basic values. Withdrawal from or sudden turn toward spiritual support.

### Taking Care of Yourself

There are simple things you can do that can help you cope:

**Accept your feelings.** Recover at your own pace and in your own way.

**Take care of yourself.** Try to stick to routines. Take your time, and make sure to eat well, exercise and get enough rest. Avoid smoking or using alcohol and drugs to cope.

**Reach out.** Talk and express your feelings with someone you trust. It can be comforting to say what’s on your mind.

**Take a break.** Take some time for you. Do something that will give you fulfillment.

**Limit your exposure.** If the event is in the news, set a time to turn off the television and computer, and put down newspapers.

**Be part of the community.** Joining community members to discuss and plan can provide an outlet and help you contribute to rebuilding.

**Strive for balance.** Take time to think about other important parts of your life, and remind yourself of what you enjoy and feel good about.

**Ask for help** if you feel stuck or overwhelmed.

### **When to Seek Help**

Sometimes stress can become difficult to handle. Remember, help is available if you need it. Get professional help if:

- You feel unable to function, or if performing basic daily activities becomes a challenge
- You are using drugs, tobacco, or alcohol or engaging in other harmful behaviors to cope
- You become depressed; feel persistently sad, tired, hopeless or worthless; lose interest in things you used to enjoy; have changes in sleep and appetite; have trouble concentrating, remembering things or making decisions; or have thoughts of death or suicide.

### **Find Help for Yourself or Someone You Care About**

**NYC Well** is your connection to free and confidential mental health support. Counselors can connect you to ongoing support for problems such as stress, depression, anxiety and drug or alcohol use.

Contact NYC Well for:

- Help and emotional support
- Counselors who will respond without judgment
- Connection to support for you or someone you care about

**Talk:** 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)

**Text:** "WELL" to 65173

**Chat:** [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell)

Texting and live chat services are available in English, Spanish and Traditional Chinese. Free over-the-phone interpretation services are available in more than 200 languages.

If your symptoms of stress become so severe that you need help urgently, or if you are thinking about harming yourself or someone else, call **911**.