

Take Care of Yourself During Times of Crisis and Trauma

During times of crisis and tragedy, it is important to remember to take care of yourself and those close to you. The most immediate concern for most people right now is for safety. The following guidelines may be helpful.

- Try to keep routine as much as possible.
- Take care not to isolate. Talk openly about your feelings.
- Restrict the amount of media coverage that you watch, listen to and/or read. We know that the more television coverage of a traumatic event(s) you watch, the greater likelihood that you may experience significant distress and trauma.
- Discuss the event with children in age appropriate ways.
- Do not allow children to watch television coverage of the event.
- Do not listen to news reports in front of children.
- Minimize the amount of details children read in the newspaper.
- For example, to a three year old you might say "Yes, a bad thing happened far away. But you are okay here and now". For older children you should reassure them that they and your family are safe. Try to answer their questions or address their concerns with concrete information.
- Be prepared to spend more time with your children at bedtime. They may need more reassurance at this time.
- Know that everyone reacts differently to crisis and trauma and expect/accept those differences ... this is normal.
- Keep an eye on your family, friends and co-workers for stress reactions. If you are concerned about how you or someone you know is reacting, call for help.

How do you know if you are stressed?

Sometimes stress can creep up on you without your being aware of it, until it accumulates and you suddenly feel overwhelmed, excessively angry, anxious or depressed. Some indicators to pay attention to- problems sleeping, drinking or eating more, lack of motivation, feeling "discombobulated," or more disorganized and anxious than usual, temper shorter than usual, impatience with family members, in the workplace or with friends.

Stress Busters

- Regular exercise is the most important anti-stressor. Be active — take a walk, ride your bike, get out in the fresh air.
- Prepare for morning the night before — put things you need to take with you by the door. Decide what you are going to wear and be sure it's ready.
- Make personal health a priority. Move, stretch, breathe! Eat healthy and nutritious meals. Keep regular meal times.
- Connect with others...spend time with supportive friends and family.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol and caffeine.

- Keep your sense of humor...laugh...sometimes it's the best medicine during trying times.
- Find a serene place of your own — even if it's just a comfortable chair in a corner. Try meditation or yoga to help you relax.
- Admit what is bothering you. Talk about it openly with someone you trust...a friend, family member, personal physician, leader in your faith community.
- Remember that children may be worrying too...reassure them, spend time together. Hugs help!
- Do something you enjoy every day.
- You can't change that stressful events happen but you can control how you respond to the events. Avoid overreacting. Focus on the positive. Do something about one small piece of a bigger problem.
- Get enough sleep.
- Pare down your to-do list, prioritize.
- Spend time in nature...it's a beautiful time of year in Colorado!

Stress Reactions: When to Get Help

Some reactions are normal and others indicate trouble ahead. If you or someone in your family find prolonged signs of the following behaviors, it may be time to seek assistance.

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Suicide threats, either direct or indirect
- Significant change in behavior
- Severe drop in job or school performance
- Relationship difficulties
- Irrational or bizarre behavior
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Headaches or stomachaches with no physical cause
- Grinding teeth
- Eating or sleeping problems, nightmares
- Depression or panic
- Confusion
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions



AURORA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

For more information or to access services, contact

Aurora Mental Health Center

303-617-2300

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