

Mental Health Aspects of Terrorism

- No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
- There are two types of disaster trauma-individual and community.
- Most people pull together and function during and after a disaster.
- Stress and grief reactions are normal responses to an abnormal situation.

Typical Reactions

fears and anxieties	irritability
crying, whimpering, screaming	confusion
excessive clinging	disobedience
fear of darkness or animals	depression
fear of being left alone	refusal to go to school
fear of crowds or strangers	reluctance to leave home
problems going to sleep	behavior problems in school
nightmares	poor school performance
sensitivity to loud noises	fighting
alcohol and other drug use	

How One Can Help

- Reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time. Very young children need a lot of cuddling, as well as verbal support.
- Answer questions about the disaster honestly but don't dwell on frightening details or allow the subject to dominate family or classroom time indefinitely.
- Encourage children of all ages to express emotions through conversation, drawing, or painting but allow silences. Listen attentively to what children are saying and provide reassurance without minimizing their fears.
- Try to maintain a normal household and encourage children to participate in recreational activity and limit viewing of news coverage and when you view news coverage do it together so you can answer questions and provide support. Adults should try to resume regular social and recreational activities when appropriate.

- Finally, acknowledge that you may have reactions associated with the traumatic event, and take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing.

In helping family, friends and co-workers in the aftermath of a disaster, individuals often benefit from talking about the experience. Some tips "Do's and Don'ts" for listening are:

Do say:

- These are normal reactions to a disaster.
- It is understandable that you feel this way.
- You are not going crazy.
- It wasn't your fault, you did the best you could.
- Things may never be the same, but they will get better, and you will feel better.

Don't say:

- It could have been worse.
- You can always get another pet/car/house.
- It's best if you just stay busy.
- I know just how you feel.
- You need to get on with your life.
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When To Refer for Mental Health Services

The following reactions, behaviors, and symptoms may signal a need to consult with the appropriate professional for further assistance.

- Disorientation** - dazed, memory loss, inability to give date or time, state where he or she is, recall events of the past 24 hours or understand what is happening
- Mental Illness** - hearing voices, seeing visions, delusional thinking, excessive preoccupation with an idea or thought, pronounced pressure of speech (e.g., talking rapidly with limited content continuity)
- Inability to care for self** - not eating, bathing or changing clothes, inability to manage activities of daily living
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts or plans**
- Problematic use of alcohol or drugs**
- Domestic violence, child abuse or elder abuse**

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