

COPING AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT: TIPS FOR JOB CORPS STUDENTS AND STAFF

After being exposed to a traumatic event—like a car crash, hurricane, shooting, suicide, or job loss event—you may be affected, whether you were hurt or whether you lost someone close to you. For two to three weeks after a distressing experience, many people feel sad, overwhelmed, or stressed. This is normal. Natural reactions to traumatic events may include:

Emotional Changes

- Feeling anxious, fearful, or easily overwhelmed
- Feeling sad or tearful
- Feeling angry
- Feeling guilty, even when you had no control over the event
- Feeling numb (not caring about anything)
- Feeling tired or having a lot of energy and being unable to relax
- Feeling as if you're on an emotional rollercoaster

Cognitive Changes

- Having nightmares or flashbacks
- Having disturbing thoughts related to the event
- Having trouble thinking clearly
- Having trouble remembering things
- Experiencing difficulty talking about the event
- Worrying a lot about safety

Physical Changes

- Experiencing stomachaches or diarrhea
- Having headaches or other physical pain for no reason
- Eating too much or too little
- Feeling shaky or jumpy (startling easily)
- Sweating or feeling chilled

Behavioral Changes

- A hard time falling or staying asleep
- Sleeping too much
- Feeling unable to relax or sit still
- Having outbursts
- Pulling away from others
- Having a hard time trusting others or accepting help

Usually, these symptoms decrease naturally over time. However, if you experience these issues for more than three weeks, notice your life is affected, or if you have any of the warning signs noted below, seek help right away.

BEHAVIORS TO AVOID

Many of us, when upset, feel the urge to do things that keep us from healing. If you find yourself unable to avoid these, reach out for help:

- Using alcohol, drugs, or non-prescribed medications in an attempt to feel better
- Isolating yourself from your friends and family and abandoning your usual activities

WARNING SIGNS

Signs that you need to seek help now:

- Feeling like you want to hurt or kill yourself
- Feeling so angry that you want to harm others
- Hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there (or others don't experience)
- Feeling unable to care for yourself
- Drinking or using drugs to try to forget what happened, or relax

TIPS TO FEEL BETTER

Remember that you have just gone through a traumatic event and it may take time to feel better. These tips may help you heal:

Talk



Ask for support from people who care about and will listen to you. Attend a support session on center, if available, to discuss your feelings and talk with others who shared the experience, or to simply be around others who understand how you feel. Talk with your counselor, RA, trusted staff, or CMHC about how you're feeling.

Calm Your Nervous System



Deep breaths can help reduce stress. Getting a massage or doing simple exercises such as stretching, walking, or yoga calm the body.

Help Others



It can be very healing to reach out to others when we are in distress ourselves.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Stress responses typically decrease over time, but they can return on the anniversary of the event, if you experience another trauma, or if you are reminded of the trauma in some way. If you experience worsening symptoms or problems, are still having difficulty after several weeks, or have any of the warning signs listed above, please seek support immediately.

CRISIS HOTLINES

Disaster Distress Helpline
Call or text (800) 985-5990

Suicide and Crisis Hotline
Call or Text 988

Job Corps Safety Hotline
(844) 521-7233



Take Care of Your Physical Self



Eat healthy meals, drink water, and get enough rest and sleep.

Stay Active



Keep doing activities that you enjoy such as listening to music, writing, playing sports, reading, exercising, drawing, or watching a movie. Often it's most helpful to focus on activities that don't involve a lot of new learning, as that may be hard for you right now.

Normal Routine



As soon as you can, try to resume your normal routine. Doing normal activities helps us heal.

Give Yourself a Break



While you may want to keep informed, take breaks from watching the news or listening to reports of the event.

HOW TO SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP

For students:

- Talk with your counselor, RA, or other trusted staff and ask for help
- Go to the Health and Wellness Center and ask to speak with a nurse, TEAP specialist, or the CMHC
- Visit the support sessions your center has arranged on _____ (fill in date/time) at _____ (fill in location).
- Call your local crisis center at _____

For staff:

- Talk with your primary care doctor.
- Inquire about an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)