

A Practical Guide to Coping

Strategies for Coping

- > **Give yourself permission to feel.** Express your feelings as they arise. Take time to cry, if needed. Don't repress any recurring thoughts or memories of the event –these thoughts will diminish over time.
- > **Talk to someone you trust.** Talk with a family member or close friend about your experience. Have someone stay with you for few hours or a day, if you live alone. Do not carry the burden of this experience alone; share it with those who care about you. Talking about the event will help you cope and recover much quicker.
- > **Take care of yourself.** Get enough rest and eat regularly. If you are irritable from lack of sleep or if you are not eating, you will have less energy to cope with the aftermath of the event.
- > **Make daily decisions.** This will give you a feeling of control over your life. Know your limits. If the problem is beyond your control and cannot be changed, accept it.
- > **Maintain your daily routine.** This will also give you a feeling of control over your life.
- > **Practice relaxation and meditation.** Create a quiet scene. You can't always get away from a situation, but you can visualize a quiet scene or a walk along the beach. Such visualization will temporarily remove you from any stressful situation.
- > **Create a comfortable environment.** At home, in your office or car play soft background music. Surround yourself with things you like and enjoy.
- > **Take one thing at a time.** For people under stress, any ordinary workload may seem overwhelming. Do not multi task. Perform one task at a time until the project is completed.
- > **Allow extra time.** If you usually plan half an hour to complete a task, schedule forty-five minutes to complete it. This will help reduce the time pressure. Do the best you can.
- > **Take a break.** Reading a favorite book or watching a favorite movie will allow you the time you need to look at the event from a different perspective.

Dos and Don'ts

People who experience a sudden unexpected event may demonstrate changes in behavior. These suggestions will help you reduce the probability of long-term reactions to such an event.

Dos

- > Get enough rest.
- > Maintain regular diet.
- > Take one thing at a time.
- > Follow a familiar routine.
- > Maintain exercise regimen.
- > Expect the event to upset you.
- > Talk to others about the event.
- > Spend time with family/friends.
- > Contact your EAP, if your reactions persist.

Don'ts

- > Don't stay away from work.
- > Don't withdraw from others.
- > Don't take on new projects
- > Don't look for easy answers.
- > Don't reduce leisure activities.
- > Don't make major life changes.
- > Don't increase caffeine intake.
- > Don't drink alcohol excessively.
- > Don't have unrealistic expectations.

Common Reactions

I. Physical Reactions

- > Shock
- > Fatigue
- > Nausea
- > Insomnia
- > Dizziness
- > Headaches
- > Loss of appetite
- > Rapid heart rate

II. Cognitive Reactions

- > Confusion
- > Hyper-vigilance
- > Memory problems
- > Lack of concentration
- > Poor decision-making
- > Poor problem solving
- > Easily remind of the event
- > Intrusive thoughts and images

III. Emotional Reactions

- > Fear
- > Guilt
- > Anger
- > Denial
- > Anxiety
- > Sadness
- > Irritability
- > Depression
- > Self-blame
- > Apprehension

IV. Behavioral Reactions

- > Agitation
- > Emotional outbursts
- > Avoidance of others
- > Impaired work performance
- > Increased need to keep busy
- > Increased or decreased appetite
- > Increase in alcohol consumption
- > Increased interpersonal conflicts
- > Decreased interests in usual activities
- > Trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping