



Your EAP Newsletter brought to you by  **FedSource**  
Work Federal. Think Private.

## **Dealing with the Effects of Terrorism**

An unexpected terrorist attack often leads to trauma of unprecedented proportion. As a result, you and those you care about likely will experience emotional distress where feelings such as fear, anger and sadness can be overwhelming. You may find that your reactions interfere with your concentration and the normal demands of life. Taking a moment to consider how a recent tragedy has affected you can help you and those around you.

### **Safety and Security Come First**

Make sure that you have checked in with your family and friends, those people who will be concerned about your safety. Are people in transit safe and situated? Are conferences and out-of-town work commitments still on?

When you take up regular travel and work again, always think ahead about the possibility of danger in public, and plan how you and your family will stay safe. In large buildings and public areas, always know the location of stairwells and emergency exits. Understand the emergency evacuation procedures in the building where you work, and make sure your family members have done the same, including your children understanding their evacuation plan at school. Of course when traveling, remain aware of your surroundings at all times, always keep your luggage with you and reject packages from strangers.

### **Support Family, Friends and Coworkers**

A large-scale tragedy costs lives, and the closer people are to the location of the attack, the more likely they will be personally affected. Supporting family, friends and coworkers mostly means being a good listener. Listen with empathy and understanding of another's feelings.

Parents will be a support to their kids, managers to their staff, and family and friends to each other. Whether communicating with an adult or a child, acknowledge the awful reality and permit expression of feelings. When appropriate, try to put the catastrophe into perspective with reminders of how rare and unusual the traumatic events are and how the best law-enforcement, medical and diplomatic leaders in the world are vigorously attacking the crisis.

Be honest with yourself and those around you. You and your friends and family may be experiencing distress that interferes with your well being and your ability to cope with the normal demands of life. Check the list of common reactions below. Have you experienced any of these?

### **Symptoms of Distress**

- Emotional withdrawal from friends and family
- Confusion, disorientation or an unusually short attention span
- Lessened ability to solve problems
- Interruption of normal eating or sleeping habits, or nightmares
- An abrupt change in regular daily activities
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Changes in speech patterns
- Antisocial acts

People in distress also sometimes experience heightened emotions of fear, guilt, anxiety, denial, depression and anger, as well as physical fatigue, chest pains, elevated blood pressure, rapid heart rate, sweating and tremors.

### **How to Cope**

First, understand that such reactions to distress are normal and will likely subside over time as people go through the predictable stages of coping with distress: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and, finally, acceptance.

There are ways you can reduce the impact of these events on your health and well being. To help the healing process, here are a few actions to take:

- Take care of yourself. You cannot help others if your own perspective is out of balance. A crisis leaves us all with less confidence and control, and it is all the more important to control what we can.
- Get in touch with how you provide meaning to life. Draw on your spiritual faith and personal values to remind you of the larger perspective. Take a few minutes every day to reflect on the good things you have in your life.
- Understand that everything will not immediately go back to normal as it was before the traumatic events, but look for the evidence that you are able to continue with life, work and love in spite of the distress.
- Try to get back to eating regular meals. Your body needs essential nutrients during stressful times, so not feeding it enough or overindulging in sweets or fats can put your body off balance. If your body is off balance, your emotions may be too.

- It is very important in stressful times to maintain healthy sleep patterns. Try not to sleep too much or too little. Your energy level and emotional state could be adversely affected by changes in your sleep behavior.
- If you exercise, try to get back to your normal routine. Because exercise patterns are linked directly to sleep patterns and caloric needs, getting your body back on track will improve your ability to cope with stress. Also, chemicals released in the brain during exercise have been shown to relieve stress.
- Reestablish your routines. Try to find joy by taking part in productive activities and projects. If you participate in regular activities, like playing bridge, going dancing, talking walks or playing sports, try to pick up where you left off. Not only do these activities relieve stress and help you feel like life is back to normal, but the sense of community that you build may help you through difficult times.
- Volunteer your time or donate to charity. Whether you make this a one-time effort to do your part or decide to make it a regular activity, doing something good for your community is a great way to deal with stress and improve the quality of life for yourself and others.

The landscape of safety can become permanently altered by a tragedy. It shakes up all of us to some degree. The events are sobering and not to be sensationalized. Rather, now is the time to assure safety, to support others and to take care of yourself. The coming days and weeks will provide numerous opportunities to memorialize and learn from a crisis.

### **Additional Information and Counseling Resources**

**Call us for the support that you need. 1-888-290-4EAP (TDD: 1800-697-0353) or go to [www.GuidanceResources.com](http://www.GuidanceResources.com). Agency ID: FEDSOURCE**

©2004 ComPsych® Corporation. All rights reserved. This information is for educational purposes only. It is always important to consult with the appropriate professional on medical, legal, behavioral or other issues. As you read this information, it is your responsibility to make sure that the facts and ideas apply to your situation