

## Strategies for Coping with Fear after a Traumatic Incident

After witnessing, experiencing, or even hearing the details of a violent or threatening event, many people experience a heightened sense of vulnerability and fear.

The following suggestions are offered to help manage fear:

1. **Acknowledge and validate the fear.**

It is normal to feel fear and to accept the range of emotions that we are experiencing.

2. **Share the fear with others.**

Meet with others who are willing to listen to your fear or to share their fear. Even if you do not feel like talking, being with others who are experiencing the same feelings and talking about them can be supportive. It can be very calming to know that you are not alone.

3. **Find ways not to be alone**

Spend time with others in order to feel like you have a safe and comforting environment. If fears are more intense at night, invite a friend to spend the night with you or go to their room.

4. **Share responsibilities for tasks that are difficult or frightening for you to do.**

Any activities associated with a traumatic event can be more difficult for awhile. Find ways of sharing those tasks until they become less frightening.

5. **Look for ways to be involved.**

Actively participate in community responses and actions, such as services and discussions that offer hope and ways to help others.

6. **Create a safe environment.**

Take time to examine and evaluate your surroundings and decide if there is anything you can do to increase your sense of safety.

7. **Get accurate information about the trauma.**

Get useful, accurate information and avoid people who exaggerate and worry about the worst eventuality. Accurate information can give you more power to deal with the situation and your feelings.

8. **Place a limit on watching the event on TV.**

The repetition and visual imagery can numb you or overwhelm you.

9. **Recognize the normal reactions to fear.**

Get information from the Counseling Center about normal reactions to trauma. It is easier to deal with intense reactions when you realize that your reactions are normal and it is the event that is abnormal.

10. **Remember that you cannot control everything.**

No one is able to completely predict, prevent or control the actions of others or events that may occur. Accepting this fact is psychologically healthy and prepares you to deal with the unpredictability of our lives. This acceptance also helps you better determine what you can have some control over.

11. **Give yourself time.**

Realize that the passage of time will help you feel less fearful. While you are accepting the passage of time, it would help to take some of the steps suggested above.