

WHEN TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN

WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

Intrusive reactions

- Distressing thoughts or images of the event while awake or dreaming
- Upsetting emotional or physical reactions to reminders of the experience
- Feeling like the experience is happening all over again (“flashback”)

Avoidance and withdrawal reactions

- Avoid talking, thinking, and having feelings about the traumatic event
- Avoid reminders of the event (places and people connected to what happened)
- Restricted emotions; feeling numb
- Feelings of detachment and estrangement from others; social withdrawal
- Loss of interest in usually pleasurable activities

Physical arousal reactions

- Constantly being "on the lookout" for danger, startling easily, or being jumpy
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep, problems concentrating or paying attention

Trauma and Loss reminders

- Places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that remind you of the disaster
- Can bring on distressing mental images, thoughts, and emotional/physical reactions
- Common examples include: sudden loud noises, the smell of fire, sirens of ambulances, locations where you experienced the disaster, seeing people with disabilities, funerals, anniversaries of the disaster, and television/radio news about the disaster

WHAT HELPS

Talking to another person for support	Spending time with others
Engaging in positive distracting activities (sports, hobbies, reading)	Using relaxation methods (breathing exercises, meditation, calming self-talk)
Getting adequate rest and eating healthy meals	Participating in a support group
Trying to maintain a normal schedule	Exercising in moderation
Scheduling pleasant activities	Keeping a journal
Taking breaks	Seeking counseling

WHAT DOESN'T HELP

Using alcohol or drugs to cope

Working too much

Extreme avoidance of thinking or talking about the event

Withdrawing from family or friends

Anger or violence

Not taking care of yourself

Overeating or failing to eat

Doing risky things

Excessive TV or computer games

Withdrawing from pleasant activities

Blaming others