

# Employee Assistance Program *Tip Sheet*

## Coping After Tragedy

If you have been impacted by a tragedy, Acentra Health EAP is available to provide you with the resources and support to help you process and deal with this traumatic experience in the short and long term.



### What You May be Feeling:

- Numb
- Shock
- Sad and withdrawn
- Helpless and hopeless
- Overwhelmed and immobilized
- Angry
- Irritable
- Guilt
- Shame
- Fear
- Worry

All these feelings are completely normal responses to a very abnormal event. There is no right or wrong way to react or feel. You may feel a combination of emotions or feel like you have moved beyond a response, such as anger, only to have it surface again. This is not unusual and does not mean that you are stuck or not progressing. The best thing you can do is let yourself experience feelings as they come. Recognize that you might have these feelings for quite a while, but you can expect them to be less intense over time. Allow yourself to feel what you're feeling without judgement.

### What You May be Experiencing Physically:

- Chest pains
- High blood pressure
- Rapid heart rate
- Gastrointestinal changes
- Shallow breathing
- Dizziness or faintness
- Chills or sweating
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches
- Grinding teeth
- Jumpiness or being easily startled
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

These responses are typical and may resolve themselves, but it is important to be aware of them. Talk to your physician if any of these symptoms continue or if you have other health conditions.

### What You Can Do:

- **Engage in calming activities to help with immediate anxiety and worry.**

Practice breathing in and out slowly and deeply which has been shown to lower anxiety and work to practice this skill daily, using 10 to 15 breaths. Try putting thoughts and feelings into words by journaling or talking with a trusted friend or family member.

- **Engage in positive activities and thoughts to help manage your mood.**

Think about the activities you used to enjoy doing. Even if you do not feel like taking part in them yet, work to re-establish your routine. This will help you gain a sense of control and improve your mood and energy.

Our thoughts influence our feelings. Angry thoughts produce angry feelings, just as calming thoughts can lead to calm feelings. Thinking something like “things will never get better” can lead to feelings of despair. Instead, try to think “this is a tough time for me, but I’m doing some things ok.”

- **Connect with others.**

Getting support is one of the most important things you can do, as is talking to those you trust about what you’re experiencing.

- **Reach out for professional help.**

If it’s been more than a few months and you are still experiencing these emotional or physical feelings, it may be time to speak with a counselor. Your Employee Assistance Program is here to help you. Contact us 24/7/365 to speak with an EAP Consultant who can connect you to a counselor and other resources in your area.

## References & Additional Resources

<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

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