

# Emotional Responses to Traumatic Events

*[Provided by: the Education Division of the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System]*

The emotional effects of the recent terrorist attacks will be felt by people everywhere. Those who were at the scene or have lost loved ones will have strong reactions, and people who saw or heard about the attacks on T.V. may also be very upset.

**Common reactions to traumatic events** like this include fear, grief, horror, helplessness, and feeling overwhelmed. People may also be bothered by nightmares or upsetting thoughts and pictures that come to mind. Young children may be upset, distracted, or out of sorts. These are normal reactions to very stressful events, and they usually get better with time. People directly affected by this tragedy, young children, people who've been through other traumatic events, and people with emotional problems may need extra help.

**Things you can do to cope** (whether you have been are upset yourself or trying to help someone who is):

- Talk or spend time with other people. Coping with stressful events is easier when people support each other.
- If it helps, talk about how you are feeling. Be willing to listen to others who need to talk about how they feel.
- Find something positive you can do. Give blood. Donate money to help victims of the attack. Join efforts in your community to respond to this tragedy. Talk to your children and loved ones to make sure they are OK.

## **For children:**

- Let them know you understand their feelings.
- Tell them that they really are safe.
- Keep to your usual routines.
- Keep them from seeing too many frightening pictures of the events.

**When to seek more help:** If a person is still very upset a month after the attack, he or she may need to get extra help coping. The sources below have information about where to get more help if it is needed.

## **Where to get more information:**

**National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder:** [www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)

This web site provides general information about trauma responses, research, and treatment.

**PTSD Alliance:** [www.PTSDAlliance.org](http://www.PTSDAlliance.org)

Provides educational information on PTSD to patients, families, and professionals.

Also can call (877) 506-PTSD toll-free to receive a free package of information about PTSD, including a video.

**Sierra-Pacific Mental Illness Research Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC):**

<http://mirecc.stanford.edu>

Contains videotreatment of presentations and journal articles on posttraumatic stress (PTSD).