



Coping With Secondary Trauma

Secondary trauma occurs when a person is exposed to someone else's traumatic experience. Hearing about or seeing videos of traumatic events can lead to many of the same reactions as those who experienced the trauma first-hand. Secondary trauma can impact how people feel, think, and behave. Individuals experiencing these reactions for more than a few weeks may benefit from seeking additional help.

Common reactions following traumatic events

Emotions

- Shock/disbelief
- Frustration/anger
- Sorrow
- Numbness
- Fear
- Stress
- Sadness
- Powerlessness
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety/worry/fear
- Cynicism and/or pessimism
- Irritability

Behaviors

- Constantly watching the news or social media
- Excessive substance use
- Being overprotective
- Keeping overly busy
- Being on guard, even when safe
- Avoiding places, activities, or people that cause distress

Thoughts

- Difficulty concentrating or following instructions
- Unwelcome images
- Trouble communicating
- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Worry about the future

Physical reactions

- Digestive issues
- Headaches, tension, pain
- Muscle trembling or weakness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Heightened alertness or jumpiness
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Hypervigilance/feeling on edge and tense



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How can Modern Health help?

Modern Health can connect you with a certified coach or a licensed therapist to help you address your needs. You can expect them to collaborate to develop a plan based on your goals, whether you're looking to reduce distress, learn new skills, or process your experience. [Get one-on-one support.](#)

Try these coping strategies



Acknowledge your feelings

Your reactions are normal responses. Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling. Try journaling as you process.



Practice self-compassion

Let yourself off the hook if you're not able to focus on being productive. Try writing, "I give myself permission to ____."



Be patient

Recovering after a traumatic event doesn't happen overnight and might include setbacks. Patience and consistent support are key.



Connect with resilience

Think about when you have experienced challenges in the past and what you have done to cope. Can you do any of those now?



Set boundaries

Limit your exposure to news of traumatic events. You don't have to watch/read about a trauma in detail to know that injustice exists.



Reach out

Reach out to loved ones for support. Also, connecting with others affected by the tragedy can help build a network of support.



Disconnect to process

It is okay to not talk about what is happening, to take a day off, and to not engage with the trauma to give yourself time to process.



Demonstrate activism

Find ways to contribute to a cause, such as protesting, donating to organizations, and/or writing letters to your representatives.



Relaxing activities

Engage in restorative activities like going for a walk, listening to music, or taking a bath/shower. Try a [Deep Breathing](#) exercise.



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