

After a Disaster: What Teens Can Do

Whether or not you were directly affected by a disaster or violent event, it is normal to feel anxious about your own safety, to picture the event in your own mind, and to wonder how you would react in an emergency.

People react in different ways to trauma. Some become irritable or depressed, others lose sleep or have nightmares; others deny their feelings or simply "blank out" the troubling event.

While it may feel better to pretend the event did not happen, in the long run it is best to be honest about your feelings and to allow yourself to acknowledge the sense of loss and uncertainty.

It is important to realize that, while things may seem off balance for a while, your life will return to normal.

It is important to talk with someone about your sorrow, anger and other emotions, even though it may be difficult to get started. You may feel most comfortable talking about your feelings with a teacher, counselor or church leader. The important thing is that you have someone you trust to confide in about your thoughts and feelings.

It is common to want to strike back at people who have caused great pain. This desire comes from our outrage for the innocent victims. We must understand, though, that it is futile to respond with more violence. Nothing good is accomplished by hateful language or actions.

While you will always remember the event, the painful feelings will decrease over time, and you will come to understand that, in learning to cope with tragedy, you have become stronger, more adaptable and more self-reliant.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Mental Health Information Center