

Returning to Normal in the Wake of a Tragedy

Following a tragedy, our lives may never be the same. As the initial shock of a traumatic event subsides and we seek to return to a sense of normalcy, some of us wonder exactly what normal is. Many may pause to ask, “What is feeling normal?” or “How should we feel?”

First, there is no standard reaction to tragedy. Experiencing new emotions and the fear of the unknown are perfectly normal. Feelings of anxiety and stress are normal as well. However, if you’re thinking about these feelings all the time and they’re starting to negatively impact your life and work performance, you may want to seek help and talk with a professional.

Common reactions to a tragedy are:

- *Fear about subjects that you never thought about before the tragedy occurred.* After a traumatic event, people may question things such as their faith, their parenting skills, or their ability to perform well at work whereas before people usually took these things for granted.
- *Emotional outbursts and startled responses.* You may have a tendency to overreact to loud noises that are unexpected, such as a car backfiring. In a heightened state of awareness, this reaction is understandable. However, remember not to panic and to stay calm.
- *Being extremely aware of things around you.* In times like these, people are cognizant of things that they would otherwise overlook, such as a noise in their house or a plane in the sky. After traumatic events, everyday occurrences may not seem everyday anymore.
- *Continued changes in sleeping or eating behavior.* You may still find yourself eating or sleeping a little more or a little less than usual. Try to return to your sleeping and eating routine. It could help get other daily habits back on track as well. Maintaining consistency will help you return to normalcy.¹

Emotionally adjusting to traumatic events can take years. It requires consistent support from family, friends, and possibly counselors. Be aware of people around you. You may not be feeling anxiety or fear, but loved ones around you may be having different reactions and could benefit from your support.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

¹ Retrieved from the World Wide Web on September 21, 2001: http://thriveonline.oxygen.com/violence/terrorism/help_friend.html