



# Crises and traumatic events

People often experience anxiety, shock and disbelief before, during and after a crisis. Some crises can be traumatic. Crises and traumatic experiences are often frightening and upsetting, and they can cause overwhelming stress. Examples of such events include auto accidents, violence in any form, natural or industrial disasters, terrorism, serious illnesses, or the unexpected death of a loved one. A traumatic experience may be a one-time event, or it can be prolonged and repeated over months or years.

## Emotional and physical reactions are normal

People commonly feel shock and disbelief before, during and/or after a crisis or traumatic event, and they may have a hard time accepting the reality of what is happening or has happened. These events can cause a range of intense emotional and physical reactions.

Emotional	Physical
<p>Normal emotional responses can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear and anxiety--these emotions may come in waves and at unpredictable times</li> <li>• Helplessness and vulnerability</li> <li>• Edginess (easily startled)</li> <li>• Sadness and depression</li> <li>• Guilt, shame or despair</li> <li>• Emotional numbness; feelings of disconnection from others</li> <li>• Problems concentrating</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts; anger and irritability</li> <li>• Flashbacks and nightmares</li> </ul>	<p>Physical reactions result from stress hormones flooding the nervous system and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty falling asleep</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Headache, abdominal or other pain</li> <li>• Increased heart rate</li> <li>• Dizziness or fainting</li> <li>• Changes in appetite</li> </ul>

Generally, these unsettling thoughts, feelings and physical reactions become less intense and less frequent in the days and weeks following a crisis.

## Available resources

Magellan Healthcare offers a range of assistance to our members and communities:

- If you are a Magellan Healthcare member, you always have access to help. Call your health plan or program phone number to start. You'll get connected to the services you need.

- You can also find resources on your health plan’s or program’s website, or our dedicated sites:
  - Crisis support: [MagellanHealthcare.com/crisis-help](https://www.MagellanHealthcare.com/crisis-help) with tip sheets for managing crises and links to professional resources for specific crisis situations and emergencies
  - Mental health support: [MagellanHealthcare.com/MYMH](https://www.MagellanHealthcare.com/MYMH) with information on a variety of emotional and mental health topics and conditions
- Right now, our crisis support hotline is available to the public. This line is answered by our certified, licensed mental health clinicians. Call 1-800-327-7451 (TTY 711) if you need to talk to someone about how you are feeling.

## Helping yourself

Try to take care of yourself throughout the year. Eat healthy foods, get enough rest and exercise regularly. This will set you up to more effectively manage crises if they occur. The following suggestions may help you as tragedies approach and occur, and when you are dealing with the aftermath.

- Use the crisis resources above to prepare for upcoming events or go directly to [Ready.gov](https://www.Ready.gov). Do as much as you can to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.
- Try to continue to take care of yourself. Doing so can reduce anxiety and promote well-being.
- Talk to people you trust about your concerns. A supportive network is very important for emotional health.
- Limit your exposure to disruptive TV, radio and social media coverage.
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and meditation.
- If you need serious help, contact your doctor.

## Managing after crises and traumatic events

The painful emotions following a crisis or traumatic event take time to process, especially when the impacts are prolonged. Disaster aftermath, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, grinding poverty and deprivation, and military combat are examples of long-lasting trauma that can cause severe psychological effects. What you do and don’t do during this time can make a difference in your emotional and physical health.

### What to do

- First and foremost, try to stabilize your situation. Get to a safe place. Obtain necessary first responder assistance. Seek out social supports such as housing, clothing and food. If you are in the military, take advantage of resources such as Ombudsmen, MWR and other offerings at your command, base or post, as well as non-profit military support organizations.
- Reach out to others for emotional support. There may be times you don’t want to talk about the traumatic event, but it’s vital to stay connected with other people, particularly those who can relate to your situation.
- Be prepared for and accept difficult emotions. Sometimes emotions may be triggered by reminders of the trauma and may be sudden or intense. These intense feelings will pass.
- When you can, ease back into your usual routine. While your appetite or sleeping habits may be off, try to eat healthy meals at regular times. Exercise and meditation can be very helpful for reducing stress.

### **What not to do**

- Do not block out emotions with alcohol or other drugs. This will just prolong the healing and could cause other problems.
- Be careful when making major changes. Give yourself time before making any big decisions.
- Do not cut yourself off from other people. You don't need to go it alone.
- Choose information outlets carefully. Make sure they are reputable, and do not watch/read too much about the event. Distressing images on the news or social media sites can be further traumatizing.

### **When to get help**

If you continue to experience stress reactions for six weeks or more, or if your reactions interfere with your ability to live a normal life, you may need help from a mental health professional. While everyone is different and heals at their own pace, some people develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after a traumatic event. Signs of PTSD include disturbing memories, nightmares or flashbacks, suicidal thoughts or feelings, disconnection from others, and trouble functioning at home and work. If you think you might have PTSD, contact your doctor immediately.

*If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call 911 or contact a suicide hotline:*

- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)*
- *Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741)*