

Community Care after a Crisis by Dwight Bain

Identifying Emotional Warning Signs and Trauma Symptoms

A community crisis can terrorize an entire community in just a few minutes, while the recovery process to rebuild from a major critical incident may take weeks or months to sort through. The more you know about how to survive and rebuild after the crisis, the faster you can take positive action to get your personal and professional life back on track.

Since community crisis events like school, mall or church shootings, bombing or terrorism are unpredictable, it requires a different course of action from natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires and floods. What can you do right now to cope with the psychological impact of a major community crisis brought on through violence?

1. Deal Directly with Your Emotions

This will reduce the tension and stress on you, which allows you to have more energy to deal with a difficult situation. However, if you stuff your fears and frustrations in a major community crisis, your emotions can quickly blow up without warning. Exploding in rage on your children, your coworkers or your marriage partner will only make a difficult situation worse.

Community crisis events are a terrible situation full of loss and difficulty for everyone. By taking action now you can move beyond feeling overwhelmed by intense stress, anger or confusion. As you follow the insight from this recovery guide, you will be taking positive steps to rebuild with the focused energy of an even stronger life for you and your family after the emergency service workers pack up and go home because your community has recovered.

To best survive a major community crisis, you need a strong combination of three key elements:

- Healthy coping skills
- Healthy supports
- Healthy perspective

2. Consider the Dangers of Long-term Stress

A major community crisis affects everyone however; it becomes dangerous to our health when the stress goes on for an extended period of time. Major stress can affect adults, children, the elderly and even pets, so it is important to be alert to watch for the danger signs of the psychological condition called Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (commonly referred to as PTSD), in yourself, your family members and coworkers.

These symptoms include any dramatic change in emotions, behavior, thought patterns or physical symptoms over the next few days, weeks or even months. Since community crisis events are a terribly

stressful time for everyone and often remain stressful for days or weeks to come, there are a number of factors to be aware of to keep yourself and those who you care about safe.

3. Identify the Warning Signs of Overload

These signs are indicators that the intense stress from the critical incident is beginning to overwhelm the individual. The longer the stress symptoms occur, the greater the severity of the traumatic event on the individual. This does not imply craziness or personal weakness; rather, it simply indicates that the stress levels from the storm were too powerful for the person to manage and their body is reacting to the abnormal situation of having survived a major trauma.

It's normal to feel completely overwhelmed by a community crisis; however, there are danger signs to watch for in yourself or others that may indicate psychological trauma. Adults or children who display any of the following stress symptoms may need additional help dealing with the events of this crisis. It is strongly recommended that you seek the appropriate medical or psychological assistance if you see a lot of the physical, emotional, cognitive or behavioral symptoms listed below in you, your coworkers, or someone in your family or home, especially if these symptoms weren't present before the crisis.

Physical Symptoms

Chills, thirst, fatigue, nausea, fainting, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, chest pain, headaches, elevated blood pressure, rapid heart rate, muscle tremors, difficulty breathing, shock symptoms, and so on.

Emotional Symptoms

Fear, guilt, grief, panic, denial, anxiety, irritability, depression, apprehension, emotional shock, and feeling overwhelmed, loss of emotional control, and so on.

Cognitive Symptoms

Confusion, nightmares, uncertainty, hyper-vigilance, suspiciousness, intrusive images, poor problem solving, poor abstract thinking, poor attention/memory and concentration, disorientation of time, places or people, difficulty identifying objects or people, heightened or lowered alertness, and so on.

Behavioral Symptoms

Withdrawal, antisocial acts, inability to rest, intensified pacing, erratic movements, changes in social activity, changes in speech patterns, loss of or increase of appetite, increased alcohol consumption, and so on.

If you are in doubt about these symptoms in your life, or someone you care about, it is wise to seek the care of a physician or certified mental health professional. Better to actively deal with the stressful emotions directly to help yourself and your loved ones to immediately cope with this crisis because these emotions tend to worsen and get more intense if left untreated. Remember that there are many experienced professionals who can help you and your children recover during a time of crisis.

You do not have to go through this alone.

Take action now to prevent stress from continuing to overwhelm you or the people you care about. Call a trusted friend to talk through it, reach out to clergy, or call your family doctor or counselor. If you don't know someone to call about these emotional issues, you can reach out for assistance by calling telephone hotlines which are offered at no cost to you. These numbers are often posted by local media, hospitals, churches, and schools, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army or FEMA. If you, or someone you care about are feeling overwhelmed by stress, anxiety, guilt or grief, it's important to make the call for assistance now to learn how to get past the pressure to begin to feel "okay" again.

About the Author –

Dwight Bain has dedicated his life to guide people toward greater results as an Author, Nationally Certified Counselor, Certified Life Coach and Certified Crisis Instructor in practice since 1984. His primary focus is managing major change as a Critical Incident Stress Management expert. Bain has spoken to over 3,000 groups on strategic change topics. He speaks over 100 times per year to groups across the United States on creating positive change. Follow him for updates at www.Facebook.com/DwightBain or www.Twitter.com/DwightBain and stay connected to his daily updates at www.Linkedin.com/DwightBain