

# NORMAL REACTIONS TO ABNORMAL EVENTS



Whether or not you are directly affected by an abnormal 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 abnormal events. Some may become irritable or depressed, others lose sleep or have nightmares, and others may deny their feelings or simply “blank out” the troubling event. Some people experience disbelief that what happened was real, or now feel disconnected from what is going on.

## **THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO FEEL AFTER EXPERIENCING AN UNSETTLING EVENT**

**Symptoms may include confusion, emotional numbness or difficulty concentrating. The intensity of these feelings might be unexpected.**

**It is common to be angry at or blame people who have caused great pain or harm to others. It is also common to create narratives that allow us to explain the unexplainable. It is important to remember that we alone control our own actions and reactions.**

**You may experience a feeling of being unsafe or vulnerable that may develop into a heightened, even excessive, fear of further threats to your safety at work and elsewhere. You may find yourself feeling paranoid or experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety or worry.**

**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 anger, emotions, and reactions. Don't be surprised if you notice more conflict in marital or other relationships, particularly in your workplace.**

**If you are experiencing any of these symptoms - remember ERS EAP is available to support you!**

**All ERS EAP services are available via telephone 24/7/365**



# TIPS FOR COPING:

**Talk about it.** Talking with friends, colleagues, family members or a counselor will help you realize that you are not alone in your feelings.

**Limit media viewing.** Take breaks from watching news coverage of the event and/or exposure to perspectives in social media.

**Take care of yourself.** Taking good physical care of yourself with rest, exercise, and healthy eating will help your body to deal with stress. Do activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.

**Avoid excess.** Avoid using alcohol, drugs, and tobacco products as a way of dealing with stress.

**Resume routines.** Getting back to your daily routines in life can be a good method for regaining a sense of control.

**Get involved.** Engaging in positive activities and relationships that help you find perspective.

**Recognize your strengths for coping.** Also accept your limitations. Give yourself as much time as needed to heal.

**Take security precautions.** Make an inventory of what will make you feel secure in your home, workplace, and when you are out in public.





## WHEN TO CALL AND ASK FOR HELP:

- You find yourself reliving old traumas you thought were healed.
- Your feelings of anger, fear, vulnerability or blame just won't go away.
- You find that you are drinking more or using other drugs to help you get through.
- Your functioning at work, home or school is being affected by your emotional stress.
- You have flashbacks, or think you see objects or people when they aren't there.
- You have thoughts of wanting to harm yourself or another person.

**If you don't have someone in whom to confide,  
call ERS EAP at **800-292-2780****