

SELF-HELP STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH TRAUMA

The following is a list of potential strategies to assist you in dealing with a traumatic situation during the first few hours, days, or weeks of such an event occurring. You may find that some strategies work better than others for you. Use the ones that seem to help you the most. If you already have ways of reducing traumatic stress, be sure to use those, as you move forward.

- **Maintain as much of your normal routine and schedule as possible.**
- **Structure your time** – so there is less non-structured time where you may find yourself alone and thinking thoughts that are not healthy or forward moving.
- **Talk to helpful people** – it can help to know that others feel similar to the way you feel.
- **Interact with others** – be with others, rather than spend time alone. Alone time is important, but human contact helps with the healing process.
- **Avoid self-criticism** – these may be very normal reactions (feeling like you could have done something to have avoided the tragedy from happening). Good to talk to others about this.
- **You may feel angry** – you may feel varying degrees of anger directed at a variety of people, things, organizations, life in general, or maybe even toward your spiritual world. It is helpful to talk to others about these feelings. Sometimes just venting can be helpful.
- **Keep a journal** – especially if you find yourself constantly thinking about what happened and all of the other related thoughts that can come up. Keeping a journal can also help, if you are finding it difficult to get to sleep or stay asleep. Journaling helps get the thoughts/feelings out of your head and heart and on paper. Journaling during the day and before you try go to sleep can help you process your thoughts and emotions which can help you get to sleep.
- **Recognize that traumatic events can cue up past trauma in your life** - which seems to amplify even more, your current difficult thoughts and feelings.
- **Save major decisions** and/or other life changes for a later date...when emotions have stabilized.
- **Do make smaller day-to-day decisions** – keeping your normal routine.
- **Eat well balanced meals and drink plenty of fluids** – avoid skipping meals because you don't "feel hungry". Getting emotionally better will require that you maintain your physical health.
- **Take time to rest** – naps and short times alone can be helpful. Consult with your physician, if you are having difficulty sleeping.
- **Really try to do some of the things you enjoy** – even though you may not feel like it. These activities can provide some needed emotional fuel to deal with the affects of trauma. These activities will not be as enjoyable for awhile, but again, they are emotional fuel.
- **Help others** – you can be an active part in helping others and yourself in healing.
- Understand that **when people ask you** if "you are doing okay?" – you can honestly reply with "no, I'm not okay, but I will be"...and, in time, you will be!
- **Write in helpful strategies here that you have used in the past, that might not be on this list:**

- **It can help to review this list everyday for the first few weeks following a tragedy to ensure that you are maintaining a healthy movement forward, as you recover.**