



Living Your Life During Terrorist Threats and Other Challenging Times

Terrorist warnings. Potential war with Iraq. Columbia space shuttle explosion. Each of these events is unsettling, causing stress, fear and anxiety throughout the country about the future. Together, they have had a cumulative effect on the mental health of Americans. How can people cope and act 'normally' in these challenging times?

We all react differently to news of disturbing events but there are common feelings many of us experience. Disbelief, fear, difficulty making decisions, nervousness and irritability, sadness and depression, and powerlessness are just a few.

Here are some things you can do to cope and maintain a sense of 'normalcy':

- Remain engaged in the world by staying connected with people. Don't withdraw. Talk to family, friends or co-workers about your fears.
- Keep up on the news but don't watch it round the clock.
- Take necessary precautions. But don't overdo it. Make an emergency communication plan with family and friends. Re-introduce yourself to neighbors and exchange phone numbers.
- Maintain your regular routine and include time to do things you enjoy.
- Get involved in local activities. Attend a meeting on community preparedness. Send a donation to a relief fund.
- Take care of your health. Make time for exercise and other pleasurable activities that distract you and lower your stress level. Avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Be optimistic about the challenges ahead. Stay in touch with your spirituality.

If your anxious or 'down' feelings don't go away or are so intense that they interfere with your daily life, seek the help of a mental health professional. This may be especially important for those who live with depression, substance abuse problems, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Information provided courtesy of the National Mental Health Association