

# COPING WITH TRAUMA

## Responding to Our Community

Traumatic events such as the active shooter event that occurred aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola in December 2019 are painful for the entire community. We cherish the strengths and courage of service members who serve on our behalf. This FAQ was developed to help people cope in the wake of such an event.

### How do we heal?

We begin the healing process by acknowledging loss and grief and accepting that it is painful for many people. Doing so will open us up to growth and resilience. This is what the science of healing tells us.

### What is resilience?

By definition, resilience is our ability for healthy functioning across time, the capacity to bounce back. Communities such as New York City after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Pensacola after the active shooter aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola, have the capacity to bounce back and grow through adversity. Studies show that resilience is more common than we might think.

### Who has resilience?

Studies have shown that roughly 50 to 60% of people in the U.S. experience traumatic stress, but only 5 to 10% develop post-traumatic stress syndrome. A lot of people do remarkably well following tragic life events.

### If I develop symptoms of PTSD, does that mean I'm a weak person?

Many people who develop symptoms of PTSD do so not because they are weak, but usually the contrary. They try and take care of everyone else before they take care of themselves. It's important to take care of ourselves first so that we can care for others.

### What signs indicate I might not be coping well?

- Less patient
- Easily startled
- Increased anger
- Withdrawal
- Reliving the event in your mind
- Someone says you aren't behaving like you normally do

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## What are some coping behaviors?

- Normalize your emotions. Anger is not bad. It's normal. It's how we manage it that's important.
- Step away from sensationalized media stories. Unplug by taking a break from the news and social media.
- Avoid isolation by spending more time with your children and pets. They lend a protective factor to our lives.
- Don't feel guilty about asking for help or asking a friend to listen to our concerns. These are the times we should ask for help.
- Take time for yourself, particularly if you are a caretaker of others.

## Who can I reach out to for help?

- A clergy member
- Primary care doctor
- Lakeview Center:
  - Central Scheduling — 850.469.3500
  - Victim Services 24/7 helpline — 850.433.7273 (Free counseling to anyone affected by a crime or secondarily affected by a crime)
  - Mobile Response Team — 866.517.7766 (a local number to a team that responds to urgent community behavior health needs to manage symptoms so that they don't get worse.)

## Is there anything I can do to help my community?

Yes. Share information and resources with local behavioral health agencies, faith-based organizations and each other. Share the message that studies show that most people are exposed to at least one major stressful event in their life times, but can once again find a meaningful purpose in life. It's important to pull together in times following a traumatic event.