

Responding to a Community Trauma

What You May Experience

After a difficult or shocking event, people react in a wide variety of ways. You may not respond the same way that others do, but below are some common responses to traumatic events:

- Increased anxiety
- Low mood
- Being irritable or angry
- Distressing memories, flashbacks, or dreams
- Feeling jumpy or on “high alert”
- Avoiding things that remind you of the event
- Lapses in memory
- Trouble talking about the event
- Finding it hard to focus on other things

These emotional responses may come and go. In general, our reactions to a trauma tend to decrease overtime (typically a few days to a few months) as a part of the body’s natural healing and recovery process.

How to Support Yourself *Right Now*

It is normal to experience the symptoms above, or others not listed. If you’re experiencing great distress due to the event (e.g., a panic attack or flashback), try a grounding technique. This is anything that will “ground” you to your physical body or environment.

Grounding may include:

- Splashing cold water on your face
- Using deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or other techniques.
- Activating all five senses with the 5-4-3-2-1 technique:
 - Name 5 things you can see in the room with you
 - Name 4 things you can feel (“chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
 - Name 3 things you can hear right now
 - Name 2 things you can smell right now
 - Name 1 good thing about yourself

How to Support Yourself *Going Forward*

It’s hard to put an exact timeline on the healing process, but here are some things that can help today, tomorrow, and pretty much every day after that:

- Notice when you’re struggling and take a break
- Try to build up a toolbox of self-care strategies, like
 - Taking a walk
 - Other physical activity
 - Talking to a friend or family member
 - Yoga, mindfulness, or meditation
 - Taking a bath
 - Doing a relaxing hobby or activity

- Listening to music
- Watching a favorite show
- Reading a good book
- Find friends, family, or supportive others to talk to about the event, when you want to –but feel free to let them know when you might not want to talk about it anymore.
- Use mental health apps, like Headspace and the Calm app, to help you get through tough moments or fall asleep.
- Be sure to focus on your sleep, nutrition, and getting your body moving.
- Try to maintain your typical routines.
- Don't go out of your way to avoid certain places or activities.
 - Don't let the trauma confine your life, but take your time to get back to normal.

How to Know if You Need More Help

If the symptoms you're experiencing persist for a long time, or are so severe that you can't attend class or any of your usual activities, it may be time to get some professional help. That could include ongoing medical attention, counseling, and referrals to community providers.

Resources

- 24/7 Crisis Line (English, Spanish, and Deaf & Hard of Hearing):
 - Dial 988
- Crisis Text Line:
 - Text HEAL to 741741 (English)
 - Text AYUDA to 741741 (Español)
- Bellevue College Counseling Center:
 - <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/> | 425-564-5747 | U 201
 - Free, confidential/private, and culturally responsive mental health counseling.
 - Drop-in / crisis appointments Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KSARC):
 - <https://www.kcsarc.org/en/> | 888.99.VOICE (888-998-6423)
 - Free, confidential help — 24 hours a day
 - Provides trauma-specific, evidence-based therapy to help victims of sexual assault heal.
 - Individual therapy is available for children aged 6+, teens and adults.
 - Cost is never a barrier to therapy services.
- Open Path Collective - Low cost counseling services (\$65):
 - <https://openpathcollective.org/>
- Psychology Today Find a Therapist Search:
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>
 - Search by: Location, insurance type, issues or concerns, language(s) spoken by the counselor, etc.
- The Washington Counselors of Color Network:
 - <https://www.multiculturalcounselors.org/>