



Recognizing and reducing anxiety in times of crisis

No one who sees or hears about a tragedy is untouched by it – and in an era of instant mass communication, the number of people exposed to such violence in one way or another is significant. Most of us will experience some related anxiety and stress that will fade over time. For some, however, such feelings may not go away on their own. We need to recognize the difference and understand that, if needed, help is available and effective.

What are common reactions?

Mass tragedies can affect us in many ways: physically, emotionally and mentally. They can make people feel angry, enraged, confused, sad or even guilty. When those feelings don't go away over a few weeks, or when they seem to get worse, it may be appropriate to seek help for yourself or the person in your life who is experiencing these difficulties. Among the signs to look for over time are:

- Feeling tense and nervous
- Constant exhaustion
- Difficulty sleeping
- Constant crying
- Isolation
- Excessive alcohol and/or drug use
- Difficulty concentrating

What can you do to help?

There are simple steps that can be taken. Get in touch with your emotions and how you are feeling. Recognize how your family and friends are feeling and if you think there may be a problem, take some time to get advice from someone trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Pay special attention to children's needs and speak with them in a calm and supportive way about their fears.

You should get immediate help from a trained professional if you or a loved one is experiencing any of these problems:

- Inability to return to normal routine
- Feeling helpless
- Having thoughts of hurting one's self or others
- Excessive use alcohol and drugs