

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT TIPS BASED ON PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID*



If you are a relief frontliner on the ground, these tips are to help you support others!

Being exposed to traumatic events, such as the horrifying explosion in Beirut, can lead to several distress reactions in adults. **These reactions are normal and usually decrease within a few days.**

Common reactions to traumatic events are:

- Physical symptoms (shaking, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, body aches)
- Feeling numb, sad, anxious, worried, confused, fearful, angry or irritable
- Having distressing memories/flashbacks, nightmares or trouble concentrating
- Feeling guilty (for surviving), feeling ashamed (for not saving others)
- Being on guard or jumpy

Dos and don'ts when supporting someone affected by a traumatic event:

What to do

- 👍 Clearly introduce yourself, your name and role.
- 👍 Ask the person how you can help them using open-ended questions.
- 👍 Listen actively to identify concerns.
- 👍 Express empathy for their feelings “I can imagine how difficult this must be for you” “I understand your concerns...”
- 👍 Allow people to express their emotions and refrain from resorting too quickly to comfort them. This might be perceived as if they don't have the right for these feelings.
- 👍 Acknowledge and normalize emotions and reactions. Ex: “You have the right to be sad, angry”, “It is normal to be feeling sad, confused or angry because of the situation...”; “I fully understand that you are feeling this way ... “
- 👍 Provide reliable information that you might have.
- 👍 Be honest of what you don't know.

What not to do

- 🚫 Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy.
- 🚫 Don't pressure persons to speak if they do not want to speak.
- 🚫 Don't give your opinions of the person's situation, just listen.
- 🚫 Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Ex: don't say...” You shouldn't feel that way.” or “You should feel lucky you survived.”
- 🚫 Don't talk about yourself or personal issues or troubles.
- 🚫 Don't give false promises or false assurances.
- 🚫 Don't use technical terminology.
- 🚫 Don't share someone else's story or experiences.

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What to do

- 👍 Be patient and calm. Use a soft tone of voice.
- 👍 Always treat the person with dignity and respect.
- 👍 Ensure confidentiality unless issues mentioned affect the safety of the individual or others.
- 👍 If the person is in emotional distress, link them to the national hotline for emotional support:
1564 - Embrace Lifeline

What not to do

- 👎 Don't shout or speak quickly.
- 👎 Don't breach the confidentiality and trust shared.

Everyone has natural ways of coping. Encourage people to use their own positive coping strategies by helping them remember how they coped in the past and what helps them to feel better. This will help them feel stronger and regain a sense of control. Some tips that can be helpful:

- Get enough rest.
- Eat as regularly as possible and drink water.
- Talk and spend time with family and friends/someone you trust.
- Do activities that usually help you relax.
- Find safe ways to help others in the crisis and get involved in community activities.

If persons are showing more severe or long-lasting distress reactions such as:

- Being immobile or withdrawn
- Not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Disoriented (not knowing one's name, where one is from or what happened)
- Feeling confused, emotionally numb, feeling unreal or in a daze
- Having difficulty to care for oneself or others.



Persons showing these signs may require more support:

- **Call the National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1564.**
- Try to make sure they are not left alone.
- Try to keep them safe until the reaction passes or you can find help from others.

Remember!

Take some rest for yourself and don't forget to eat and stay hydrated. You would be able to help better when you recuperate.