

January 17, 2014



Share the Wellness Tip

Life After Trauma

People who witness a natural disaster, serve in combat, or fall victim to violence often struggle with emotional or psychological trauma. They may experience anger, hopelessness, confusion, withdrawal, or numbness for weeks or months afterward. Dealing with these feelings during the holidays can be especially difficult.

Fortunately, you can take steps to help you feel better, including these:

- **Spend time with other people.** Being alone can make you feel worse. Instead, maintain close relationships with family and friends who can help you heal.
- **Seek support.** Speaking with a clergy member, trusted family member, or counselor about your emotions can help you feel better. So can joining a support group for trauma survivors.
- **Stick to a daily routine.** Doing so can help you feel grounded and in control.
- **Adopt healthy habits.** Getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and avoiding alcohol and drugs can help you cope with your mental stress.
- **Help someone else.** It may also help to volunteer through a charitable or religious organization. Make a donation to a favorite cause.
- **Spend time doing things you enjoy.** Activities such as gardening, reading, taking photographs, going fishing, or doing crafts can be restorative.
- **Live in the present.** Being mindful—not regretting the past or worrying about the future—can help you feel better. Focus on what you're doing, seeing, and feeling in each moment.
- **Learn and practice relaxation exercises.** Deep breathing, meditating, or listening to relaxation recordings can help you relax.

When to Get Help

Speak with your doctor or a mental health professional if, despite self-help strategies:

- You continue to feel overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, depressed, or disconnected from others.
- You have trouble functioning at work or home.
- You are experiencing flashbacks or nightmares.

Sources: The American Cancer Society, Centura Health

