

## You Are Not Alone

# Managing Traumatic Stress

You are in the process of recovering from a traumatic event. An experience like this is sudden and overwhelming. There may be no outwardly visible sign of physical injury, but there is nonetheless a serious emotional toll. There are a number of steps you can take to help restore emotional wellbeing and a sense of control following a disaster or other traumatic experience, including the following:

- 1. Give yourself time to heal.** Anticipate that this will be a difficult time in your life. Allow yourself to mourn the losses you have experienced. Try to be patient with changes in your emotional state.
- 2. Ask for support** from people who care about you and who will listen and empathize with your situation. However, keep in mind that your typical support system may be weakened if those who are close to you also have experienced or witnessed the trauma.
- 3. Communicate your experience** in whatever ways feel comfortable to you, talking with close family, friends or colleagues, keeping a journal or writing about your experience in detail, just for yourself, or to share.
- 4. Exercise** will enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress. Try to exercise even if it's just walking 10-15 minutes per day.
- 5. Eat well-balanced meals** and get plenty of rest. If you experience ongoing difficulties with sleep, you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques.
- 6. Avoid alcohol and drugs.** Studies show that alcohol actually increases the stress response by stimulating production of the same hormones the body produces when under stress.
- 7. Establish or re-establish routines** such as eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. Take some time off from the demands of daily life by pursuing hobbies or other enjoyable activities.
- 8. Avoid major life decisions** such as switching careers or jobs if possible because these activities tend to be highly stressful.

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