



### 1.3 TIP/Good practice

Developed by



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

### Self-Protection for Adults

When a catastrophic event occurs, it has a strong impact on individuals and their community. When there is an ongoing situation like the Coronavirus pandemic or a critical event, people often respond with a great deal of emotion. As a result, it is possible that people will not function at their best during their exposure to the event and afterwards. Here are some suggestions to help us during these times.

#### Phases that can occur from the time you are exposed to the present:

- Acute Phase: You may feel the following during this phase: unimportant, a sense of derealization (feeling your surroundings are not real), not like yourself, numb, confused, space and temporal disorientation. Shock is a normal mechanism allowing us to maintain a certain distance from the event; this can help us absorb the impact and attend to the immediate needs of the situation.
- Emotional Impact Phase: This phase includes a variety of emotions such as sadness, guilt, rage, fear, confusion and anxiety. Somatic reactions can also develop, like physical disorders such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, etc., and difficulties finding a state of calm.

- Coping Phase: During this phase, we try to cope by finding a way to understand what happened and using all our resources. We ask questions such as: “Why did it happen?” “What can I do?” “Why now?” etc.

Most common reactions that might occur over the course of several days or weeks:

- Intrusive Thoughts: Recurring images; involuntary and intrusive memories (flashbacks).
- Avoidance: Wanting to avoid related thoughts or feelings; avoiding anything to do with the event/the situation.
- Depressed Mood and/or Persistent Negative Thoughts: Negative beliefs and expectations about ourselves or the world such as thinking: “The world is totally dangerous.”
- Self-blame: Persistent and irrational feelings of guilt about self or others for having caused the traumatic event or its consequences, especially if having had contact with those infected.
- Guilt: Feelings of guilt for having survived/not been infected.
- Negative Emotion: Persistent negative emotions related to the trauma/threatening situation such as feeling fear, horror, rage, guilt, persistent shame even after the situation is getting better.
- Sleeping and/or Eating Dysregulation: Difficulties falling asleep, frequent awakenings and nightmares, or hypersomnia (sleeping for long periods of time). Eating too much or too little.
- Anhedonia: Strong loss of interest in pleasant activities.
- Overwhelm: Being overwhelmed by daily tasks and having to restructure daily activities; feeling paralyzed.

Note: There are marked individual differences in the appearance, duration and intensity of these reactions.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

- Recognize our own emotional reactions and the difficulties that we might have.
- Do not deny feelings. Remember, it is normal for everyone to have emotional reactions when an unexpected, unforeseeable and threatening event/situation occurs.
- Monitor our physical and emotional reactions.
- Remember, we are not alone. Even when we are not in contact physically, we are part of a larger system. This organization can support and help us emotionally and psychologically.

- Talk about the critical event/situation to others. This helps us to release emotional tension.
- Respect that others' may have different emotional reactions and action/behaviour that may be difficult to understand from our point of view.
- Keep in touch with others. Establish a new, predictable daily routine during this time.
- Ask for help from people we trust and with whom we feel safe.
- Take some time to recover. It is not necessary to focus on what is happening 24/7. Pay attention to our needs. Distance ourselves from the event/the situation by sleeping, resting, thinking, crying, being with our loved ones, etc.
- Protect our emotional health by accessing support services as needed.
- Obtain psychological support focused on reprocessing traumatic memories and reactions resulting from the event/the situation, as needed.
- Limit access to media to once or twice a day. Often, when a critical incident is occurring, our response is to find meaning through spending a lot of time reading the commentary and watching the news. It is important to protect and limit ourselves from excessive exposure.
- Use official channels as our sources of information, such as the World Health Organisation website: <https://www.who.int/> and follow its guidelines on hygiene practices.
- Remember that a positive attitude and avoiding catastrophic thoughts help us and our community.

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