

No one can promise absolute safety, but steps can be taken to be more prepared than scared of possible crises. The U.S. Government has increased measures to prevent future attacks of



terror. Airports, employers, schools, retailers, etc., are taking steps to prevent disasters of many kinds.

Handling a crisis and moving on is not always easy, but must be done. This is the focus of this booklet. Its goals are to:

- Help you recognize normal reactions to a crisis
- Provide ways to help you cope with these reactions
- Suggest ways and to help you be ready for and to deal with a crisis
- Provide resources for information and help

Don't prepare to be the victim of a crisis.

Instead, prepare to act in the event of a crisis.

Turn your fears into action. Be vigilant. Look out for your own safety and the safety of others. Take Charge!

Coping with a Crisis

The first step in coping with a crisis is to recognize what is happening. Part of this is to accept the feelings and reactions you have as normal responses to an abnormal event. Some reactions show that your body and mind are on a high state of alert. Others are part of the healing process. The second step is to manage the effect the crisis has on you (e.g., how you feel and the ability to live your life).

Typical Reactions to a Crisis

Reactions to a crisis or trauma vary widely.

Some common ones are listed in this section.

You may experience many, only a few, or none of these reactions.

Behavior Reactions

- Crying, anger outbursts, restlessness
- Withdrawal, isolating yourself, or clinging to others
- Increased urge for alcohol or drugs
- Problems with family, friends, co-workers
- Being “on guard” or easily startled
- Inappropriate humor
- Change in eating, sleeping, and or other behaviors
- No longer maintaining daily routines. You may be too afraid to leave your home.

Emotional Reactions

- Anger
- Irritability
- Emotional numbness
- Worry
- Fear
- Sadness
- Grief
- Feeling unmotivated



- Feeling unsafe
- Weakness
- Feeling insecure
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Feeling overwhelmed

Physical Reactions

- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Nervousness
- Change in appetite
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness, fatigue, exhaustion
- Insomnia

Mental Reactions

- Disbelief
- Shock
- Recurring thoughts of the event
- Confusion
- Poor memory
- Impaired concentration
- Inability to make decisions
- Bad dreams
- Violent fantasies
- Changes in or questions about religious beliefs

“A crisis event often explodes the illusions that anchor our lives.”

Robert Veninga

These
reactions
to a crisis
or trauma
are
common.



Most people fully recover from even moderate stress reactions within six to sixteen months.

The information given at www.HealthyLearn.com will help you deal with your reactions and alert you when to seek help from a mental health professional.

Dealing With Fear

“Fear makes the wolf larger,” is an old proverb. It is natural to feel afraid at certain times in life. By keeping your perspective, you will not let fear run your life. How can you do this?

- Ask yourself, “What are the real chances of my fear(s) coming true?” (Being the target of terrorism, being in a plane crash, etc.). Keep in mind how rarely these events occur.
- Someone once gave an acronym for FEAR: **F**alse **E**xpectations **A**ppearing **R**eal. Don’t imagine terrible things that haven’t happened.

- Throughout the day, repeat statements, such as, “Whatever happens, I will deal with it!” and “I will conquer fear!”
- For those who are spiritual, faith is stronger than fear. See “Spirituality Can Help You Cope” at www.HealthyLearn.com.
- Strive to live fully in the present moment.
- See also the “Self-Help for Anxiety” at www.HealthyLearn.com.



Handling Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of dread, fear, or distress over a real or imagined threat to your mental or physical well-being. When anxiety becomes

extreme, possible threats are overestimated.

Also, inner strength, support from family, the community, and the nation are underestimated.



A certain amount of anxiety is normal. It can alert you to seek safety when you are in physical danger. Anxiety is not normal, though, when there is no apparent reason for it or when it overwhelms you and interferes with your day-to-day life. If this is the case, seek help from your doctor, a mental health professional, or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at work.



Treatment can include medication and counseling. It may also include behavior therapy or taking part in a self-help group.

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

Rapid pulse and/or breathing rate

Racing or pounding heart

Dry mouth

Sweating

Trembling

Shortness of breath

Faintness

Numbness/tingling of the hands, feet, or other body part

Feeling a “lump in the throat”

Stomach problems

Self-Help for Anxiety

- If you are prescribed medication, take it as advised.
- Identify your feelings.
- Talk to others about your fears. It's okay to ask for help. If available at your place of work, attend group meetings with an EAP counselor or other mental health professional where people can share feelings.

- Follow the tips under “Balance Body, Mind, and Spirit” at www.HealthyLearn.com.
- Maintain your normal routines.
- Escape for a little while. Go to a movie. Read a good book. Take a walk in the woods or a trip to a museum.



- Take a long, warm shower or bath.
- Don’t fight the desire to cry. Tears can help relieve stress and also release a natural pain-relieving substance from the brain.
- Laugh a lot. Laughter relaxes muscles and relieves tension.
- Recognize the things you can control and what you can’t control. Identify and use your own strengths and resources.
- Use measures that have helped you overcome fear and helplessness in the past.
- Don’t take on more than you can handle. Make a to-do list. Prioritize important items.
- Reward yourself. Treat yourself to little things that make you feel good.
- Think positively.

- Learn and practice guided imagery and

progressive relaxation.

- Practice for upcoming events that worry you. Imagine yourself feeling calm and in control during the event.
- Help others. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.) The positive feelings from this can help you forget about your own worries.
- Limit or avoid caffeine. Don’t have it after noon or at least eight hours before bedtime.
- Avoid nicotine, alcohol, and stimulants (e.g., some weight loss products, stay awake pills, etc.).
- Plan to deal with anxiety symptoms if you think they will happen (e.g., sit in an aisle seat if you get anxious in a theater, etc.).
- Avoid too much coverage of a tragic event. (See “The Effects of the Media” at www.HealthyLearn.com.)

