



2015 Handbook for Dealing with
Trauma After a Terrorist Attack

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INTRODUCTION

Recovering from Sudden and Violent Terrorist Attacks

Terrorist attacks can occur anywhere and at any time. They are sudden and destructive, and leave you feeling a total loss of control as you are left facing all the damage it leaves behind. This can leave you feeling distressed and frightened.

It is most disturbing when you directly experience or witness an event that threatens your health, life and safety, or that of someone you care about. However, even reading about events in the media, concern for friends and loved ones abroad, or worrying about how to best prepare your employees and your family for unforeseen potential emergencies can cause severe stress.

This handbook is intended to provide some guidance on how to manage stress and recover from sudden distressful terrorist attacks, as well as to provide some general safety and awareness tips.



INDIVIDUALS' REACTIONS TO TRAUMATIC EVENTS

A traumatic event, whether an act of violence or terrorism, a disaster or an accident, turns a person's life upside down. By definition, this kind of event causes moderate to severe stress reactions. Affecting survivors, rescue workers, and friends and family members of victims directly involved, a traumatic event may also have an effect on people who witnessed it directly or through the media. Whatever the nature of the event, individuals' experience and reactions to it will be unique to them.

NORMAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Traumatic events have a way of changing a person's perspective, assumptions and expectations of life. They can leave people feeling shocked, saddened and vulnerable. However, it is important to remember that these are normal reactions to an abnormal and unexpected event.

Understanding one's response after a traumatic event may help an individual cope better. The following are common emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physical reactions to stress. A person may experience some or all reactions, or additional changes not included on the list. An individual may immediately feel strong emotions or not notice a change until later. Typically, these reactions subside within two weeks.

Emotional Reactions

Emotional reactions include

- shock;
- numbness, feeling nothing;
- anxiety, depression and sadness;
- guilt for being better off than others who survived the event;
- fear of returning to where the incident took place, of another occurrence, of harm to self and loved ones, of being on one's own or having to leave family;
- uncertainty of feelings;
- feeling lost and abandoned; or
- feeling overwhelmed.



Cognitive Reactions

Among common cognitive reactions are

- poor concentration or difficulty making decisions;
- confusion;
- memory loss;
- shortened attention span;
- unwanted memories; and
- indecisiveness.

Behavioural Reactions

Behavioural reactions can be

- irritability, getting into arguments;
- withdrawal;
- suspicion;
- inappropriate humour;
- loss of interest in family, friends and daily routine;
- change in sexual interest;
- increased consumption of nicotine, alcohol and drugs; and
- increased or decreased eating.

Physical Reactions

Physical reactions could include

- headaches, nausea, stomach pains, tightness in the chest, muscle pain (generally feeling unwell);
- listlessness and feeling tired;
- increased sensitivity to noise or people;
- pounding heart, rapid breathing, edginess;
- loss of appetite;
- tremors; and
- disturbed sleep or upsetting thoughts, dreams and nightmares.

There is no simple fix to make things better right away, but there are actions that can help the individual cope better and heal from the traumatic event.

DOS AND DON'TS – SOME COPING STRATEGIES

- Understand that everyone reacts differently to trauma. It's OK if one person's response is different from someone else's.
- Give yourself time and permission to feel out of sorts, anxious or sad. Having gone through an ordeal, people will have good and bad days. That's part of the healing process.
- Get plenty of rest, nourishment and exercise (at the minimum, take a walk). Focus on relaxing rather than stressful activities.
- Maintain a usual routine. Make as many daily decisions as possible, encouraging a feeling of control.
- Be more careful around the house and while driving. Accidents are more common after a severely stressful event.
- Express needs and emotions clearly and honestly. Reach out to at least one person who is a good listener and non-judgmental.
- Accept support and help from caring family and friends. An individual might also want to share feelings with others who have also been affected and check to see how they're doing.
- Resolve day-to-day conflicts so they don't build up and add to feelings of stress.
- Help other people in the community as a volunteer. Stay busy.
- Don't attempt to numb the pain with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or coffee.
- Don't bottle things up. Allowing feelings to come out will help with recovery. Talk, cry, share thoughts, write them in a journal – whatever works.
- Don't shy away from situations, people or places that bring back memories of the event.
- Don't dwell on media reports on the tragedy. Limit time around the sights and sounds of what happened.
- Don't make big life changes or snap decisions until fully recovered from the event.
- Don't try to fight recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks. These are normal and will decrease over time.

WHEN TO SEEK EXTRA SUPPORT

Sometimes the stress can be too big to handle alone. If experiencing any of the following, an individual should consider seeking additional support:

- inability to take care of self or children;
- continuing to feel numb, tense, confused or exhausted;
- feeling sad or depressed for more than two weeks;
- inability to handle intense feelings, emotions or bodily reactions;
- continuing to have nightmares and a poor sleeping pattern;
- smoking, drinking or taking drugs to excess;
- thinking about suicide;
- continuing to make mistakes or have accidents;
- realising that work performance and relationships are suffering; and
- having no one with whom to share emotions, and feeling the need to do so.

WHERE TO GO FOR EXTRA SUPPORT

Seek support from

- your doctor or regular physician;
- your employee assistance programme (EAP);
- a mental health counsellor;
- local support groups;
- a religious or spiritual leader; or
- a suicide prevention hotline, if necessary.



Sulaski, C. & Schuette, B. (Ed.) (2014; Revised 2015). *Individual's reactions to traumatic events* [Global Edit]. London: Workplace Options.

PSYCHOSOCIAL REACTIONS TO A MAJOR INCIDENT

If you, a family member or friend has been involved in a major incident or event, you may experience a reaction that affects your feelings and behaviour. The advice here describes how you might feel in the days and months after the incident, and where to go if you feel you need further help and support.

HOW YOU MIGHT BE AFFECTED

People and communities are remarkably resilient, but major events are shocking and some of them can be overwhelming. People react differently; feelings can be very powerful and difficult to live with, but they do usually become less intense with time.

People who are directly involved are the people who are most likely to be affected, but witnesses to events where people have lost their lives may also have strong feelings. Friends and relatives not directly involved will be worried about those who are.

Immediately Afterwards

Immediately afterwards, you might feel

- stunned, dazed or numb;
- cut off from what is going on around you;
- unable to accept what has happened; or
- that it hasn't really happened.

Usually, these feelings fade and others may take their place in the hours or days afterwards.

In the Following Few Weeks

In the following few weeks, you might experience

- tears and sadness;
- fear;
- anxiety;
- anger or irritability;
- elation about surviving;
- unpleasant memories or guilt about the event;
- problems with your concentration and/or memory;
- difficulties with sleeping, nightmares and tiredness;
- reduced appetite or energy;
- reluctance to discuss the event, or you wish to talk about it all the time; and
- wanting to avoid people, places or activities that remind you of the event (this might include travelling on public transport).

HOW YOU MIGHT BE AFFECTED IN THE LONGER TERM

The thoughts, feelings and behaviours described above are common reactions to a major incident. Sometimes these reactions last longer than several weeks; in a small proportion of people, feelings may become more intense. In these circumstances, you may find it useful to contact your general health provider or mental health practitioner. There are also a number of agencies that are set up to help people after bereavement and after their involvement in major incidents.

Occasionally, a person's reactions may indicate that they are developing a problem with their mental health, such as anxiety, depression or a post-traumatic stress condition. If this occurs, your general medical or mental health practitioner should be able to make arrangements for assessment of your needs. They can also give further information on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its treatment, if that is relevant.

Sometimes major events result in death. Grief is a normal reaction to the death of someone close to you. When that death is sudden and unexpected, normal grief reactions often become more intense, and the feelings of shock, anger and distress can feel quite overwhelming. Many of the reactions to a major incident are similar to grief reactions. If you have survived an event and also been bereaved by the same incident, you may find it particularly hard.

HOW YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF

Everybody can benefit from support from relatives and friends after a major incident, but there are also things that you can do for yourself and things you should avoid.

What is usually helpful?

- Do things that make you feel safe and secure.
- Try to re-establish your usual routines, such as going to work or school.
- Take good care of yourself physically: eat well, exercise regularly.
- Take each day at a time.
- Be patient with yourself; it may take weeks or months to feel that you and your life are back to normal.
- Allow your friends and relatives to be supportive.
- Try to get enough sleep.
- Talk it over when you are ready, but don't worry if you get upset or cry.
- Take extra care; after a major incident or event, people are more likely to have accidents.

What is unlikely to help?

- Alcohol and drugs, while they can numb your feelings, can also stop you from coming to terms with what has happened or cause more problems later.
- Bottling up your feelings can be harmful to your health; let yourself talk when you feel ready.
- Isolating yourself from others is not healthy, although finding time to reflect on your own might be useful.

GETTING FURTHER HELP

Most people who have encountered a major incident find that they get better over time. However, if you are still having difficulties after a fortnight, you might find your general medical or mental health practitioner's advice helpful.

COPING WITH TRAUMA: HOW CAN FAMILIES BE SUPPORTIVE?

Your loved one has been through a traumatic incident. What can you do to help support them? Below are several suggestions for offering support and comfort during a trying time.

LISTEN.

One of the most important needs after a trauma is to talk about the event – and to do so often. Talk about it over and over. It may be difficult for you to hear, or you may get tired of hearing the same story, but talking is a crucial part of your loved one's recovery.

Be supportive and sympathetic, but try to avoid over-reacting. Your loved one needs to tell his or her story and not be upset by your reactions. If your loved one tries to shield you from the event by refusing to talk about it, you obviously cannot force him or her to talk. However, you can encourage openness and listen to whatever else the person wants to say.

INCLUDE THE WHOLE FAMILY IN THE HEALING PROCESS.

You and your spouse or partner may feel you should protect your children from the upsetting event. Regardless, they'll undoubtedly know something is wrong. This can be stressful for them too, and they may need some help to get through it.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

While it is important to be supportive, you also need to take care of yourself. Ask friends and family for help, and don't be afraid to seek counselling for yourself if needed.

ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS.

Take time out for your family, have a special meal together or take small outings. Appreciating the little things won't make the pain go away, but will help in the healing process.

Workplace Options (Revised 2015). Coping with trauma: How can families be supportive? London: Author.



HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFTER TRAUMATIC EVENTS

This gives tips for talking with and helping children and youth cope after a disaster or traumatic event.

ADULT SUPPORT AND REASSURANCE IS THE KEY TO HELPING CHILDREN THROUGH A TRAUMATIC TIME.

When children experience a trauma, watch it on TV or overhear others discussing it, they can feel scared, confused or anxious. Young people react to trauma differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. As such, adults do not always know when a child needs help coping. This article will help parents, carers and teachers learn some common reactions, respond in a helpful way and know when to seek support.

POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO A TRAUMATIC EVENT

Many of the reactions noted below are normal when children and youth are handling the stress right after an event. If any of these behaviours lasts for more than two to four weeks, or if they suddenly appear later on, these children may need more help coping.

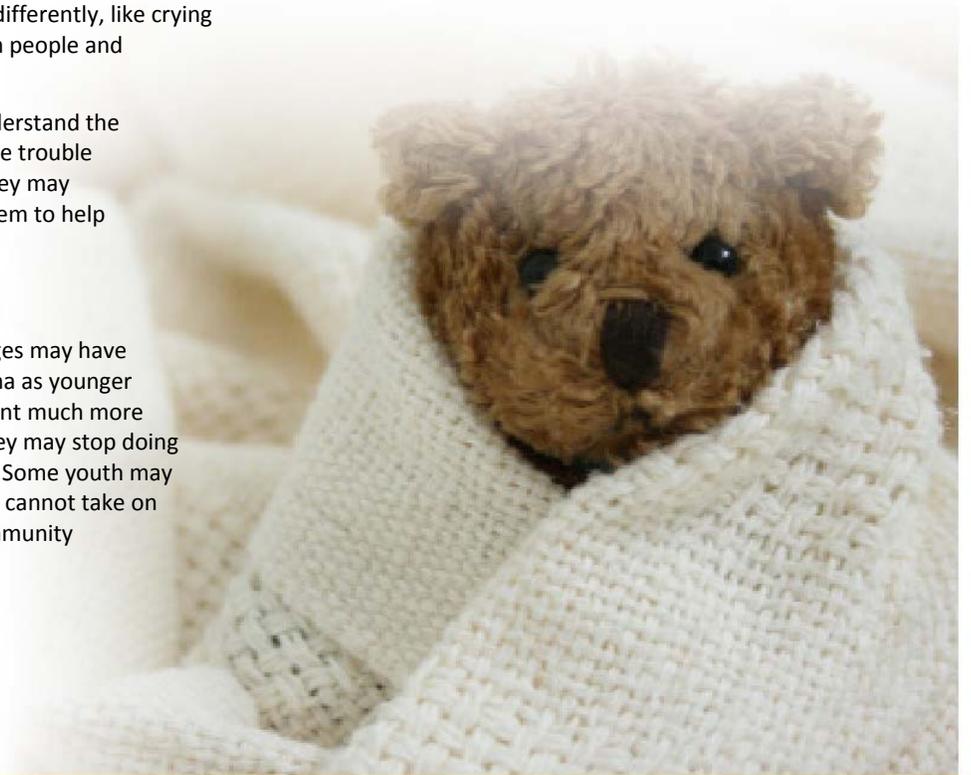
Preschool Children, 0–5 Years Old

Very young children may go back to thumb-sucking or wetting the bed at night after a trauma. They may fear strangers, darkness or monsters. It is fairly common for preschool children to become clingy with a parent, carer or teacher, or to want to stay in a place where they feel safe. They may express the trauma repeatedly in their play or tell exaggerated stories about what happened. Some children's eating and sleeping habits may change. They also may have aches and pains that cannot be explained. Other symptoms to watch for are aggressive or withdrawn behaviour, hyperactivity, speech difficulties and disobedience:

- **Infants and toddlers, 0–2 years old**, cannot understand that a trauma is happening, but they know when their carer is upset. They may start to show the same emotions as their carers, or they may act differently, like crying for no reason, withdrawing from people and not playing with their toys.
- **Children, 3–5 years old**, can understand the effects of trauma. They may have trouble adjusting to change and loss. They may depend on the adults around them to help them feel better.

Early Childhood to Adolescence, 6–19 Years Old

Children and youth in these age ranges may have some of the same reactions to trauma as younger children. Often, younger children want much more attention from parents or carers. They may stop doing their schoolwork or chores at home. Some youth may feel helpless and guilty because they cannot take on adult roles as their family or the community responds to a trauma or disaster:



- **Children, 6–10 years old**, may fear going to school and stop spending time with friends. They may have trouble paying attention and do poorly in school overall. Some may become aggressive for no clear reason. They may act younger than their age by asking to be fed or dressed by their parent or carer.
- **Youth and adolescents, 11–19 years old**, go through a lot of physical and emotional changes because of their developmental stage, so it may be even harder for them to cope with trauma. Older teens may deny their reactions to themselves and their carers. They may respond with a routine 'I'm okay' or even silence when they are upset. They may complain about physical aches or pains because they cannot identify what is really bothering them emotionally. Some may start arguments at home and/or at school, resisting any structure or authority. They also may engage in risky behaviours, such as using alcohol or drugs.
- Adults can help children and youth see the good that can come out of a trauma. Heroic actions, families and friends who help, and support from people in the community are examples. Children may better cope with a trauma or disaster by helping others. They can write caring letters to those who have been hurt or have lost their homes; they can send thank-you notes to people who helped. Encourage these kinds of activities.
- If human violence or error caused an event, be careful not to blame a cultural, racial or ethnic group, or persons with psychiatric disabilities. This may be a good opportunity to talk with children about discrimination and diversity. Let children know that they are not to blame when bad things happen.
- It's okay for children and youth to see adults sad or crying, but try not to show intense emotions. Screaming and hitting or kicking furniture or walls can be scary for children. Violence can further frighten children or lead to more trauma.
- Adults can show children and youth how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and emotional health, you are more likely to be readily available to support the children you care about. Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, exercise and take deep breaths to handle stress.

HOW PARENTS, CARERS AND TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN'S RECOVERY

The good news is that children and youth are usually quite resilient. Most of the time they get back to feeling okay soon after a trauma. With the right support from the adults around them, they can thrive and recover. The most important ways to help are to make sure children feel connected, cared about and loved:

- Parents, teachers and other carers can help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing and singing. Most children want to talk about a trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset or stressed. Crying is often a way to relieve stress and grief. Pay attention and be a good listener.
- Adults can ask the teens and youth they are caring for what they know about the event. What are they hearing in school or seeing on TV? Try to watch news coverage on TV or the internet with them. Limit access so they have time away from reminders about the trauma. Don't let talking about the trauma take over the family or classroom discussion for long periods of time. Allow them to ask questions.

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

Preschool Children, 0–5 Years Old

Give these very young children a lot of cuddling and verbal support:

- Take a deep breath before holding or picking them up, and focus on them, not the trauma.
- Get down to their eye level and speak in a calm, gentle voice using words they can understand.
- Tell them that you still care for them and will continue to take care of them so they feel safe.

Early Childhood to Adolescence, 6–19 Years Old

Nurture children and youth in this age group:

- Ask the children in your care what worries them and what might help them cope.
- Offer comfort with gentle words, a hug when appropriate or just your presence.
- Spend more time with the children than usual, even for a short while. Returning to school activities and getting back to routines at home is important too.
- Excuse traumatised children from chores for a day or two. After that, make sure they have age-appropriate tasks and can participate in a way that makes them feel useful.
- Support children spending time with friends or having quiet time to write or create art.
- Encourage children to participate in recreational activities so they can move around and play with others.
- Address your own trauma in a healthy way. Avoid hitting, isolating, abandoning or making fun of children.
- Let children know that you care about them – spend time doing something special with them, and make sure to check on them in a non-intrusive way.

A Note of Caution: Be careful not to pressure children to talk about a trauma or join in expressive activities. While most children will easily talk about what happened, some may become frightened. Some may even get traumatised again by talking about it, listening to others talk about it or looking at drawings of the event. Allow children to remove themselves from these activities, and monitor them for signs of distress.

WHEN CHILDREN, YOUTH, PARENTS, CARERS OR TEACHERS NEED MORE HELP

In some instances, a child and his or her family may have trouble getting past a trauma. Parents or carers may be afraid to leave a child alone. Teachers may see that a student is upset or seems different. It may be helpful for everyone to work together. Consider talking with a mental health professional to help identify the areas of difficulty. Together, everyone can decide how to help and learn from each other. If a child has lost a loved one, consider working with someone who knows how to support children who are grieving. Find a caring mental health professional.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Revised 2015 [Ed.]).
Tips for talking with and helping children and youth cope after a disaster or traumatic event: A guide for parents, caregivers, and teachers (Pub. No. SMA-12-4732).
Retrieved 18 November 2015 from <http://store.samhsa.gov>

COPING WITH CRISIS

PERSONAL RECOVERY

WHEN THE MEDIA BLOWS IT UP

The news can be full of stories about unexpected or bad things like natural disasters, disease threats, bombings, kidnappings and war. The scary thing is that it may seem like these things are happening all around you, even in places where you feel secure – like your university campus, shopping centres and at home. Seeing these things on can cause you to feel uncertain, worried or scared. These feelings may last even after the event is over.

Here are some tips to understanding the news and what you see and hear:

- **The news doesn't talk about everyday activities.** Instead, the news talks about things that are out of the ordinary – both good and bad. Sometimes it seems like the news captures more of the bad stuff – things like tragedies and crime. For example, if a bomb explodes, it will get a lot of attention in the news – so much so, that you may think bombs explode all the time. In fact, this is an infrequent event that doesn't happen every day – that is why the news will report on it at length.
- **Sometimes you see stories over and over** about tragic events like bombings, or disasters such as floods, earthquakes or hurricanes. This doesn't mean these things are happening all the time – it just means that the news is talking about it again. The news will cover something when it first happens, and then repeat the story. You may see it on the news in the morning and then again at night. After the first day, the news may do what is called a *follow-up story* to tell you what happened after the event. Therefore, you may hear about the same thing for a few days, even though it only happened once.
- **Bad news can alert you to what is going on around you.** For example, a news story could tell you about someone in your community who is breaking into homes. While this may scare you, just remember that even though it's on the news, that doesn't mean it will happen to you. Stories like this can help make you aware of your surroundings and of things you can do to protect yourself.
- **Disasters or tragic events can bring out the best in people:** Firefighters and police officers are doing their jobs (like saving people), and volunteers and everyday citizens also are there to help. You will see people in your community volunteering to bring food and clothing to help those who are affected, families coming together to help each other out and shelters being put into place to give people a place to stay. You can get involved too!

It is normal to be concerned about what you hear in the news. However, it is important to know that while things may seem uncertain for a while, your life usually will return to normal fairly soon.



WEAVE YOUR OWN SAFETY NET.

Following these tips can help you get on with your day-to-day life, even during stressful times:

- **Talk to your friends and family and spend time with them.** If you find yourself feeling unsafe, uncertain, worried or scared, or if you don't understand what is going on around you, talk to your family, university professors, colleagues or a counsellor. By talking with your friends and your family, you can share your feelings and know you are not alone. Plus, spending time with them may help you feel more safe and secure.
- **Help out others.** Sometimes when you are concerned about what is going on around you, it is helpful to give others support. You can help by raising money, donating clothes, or organising an event like a food drive to collect food and/or supplies for an organisation that helps people affected by war, terrorism or natural disasters. Even if you and your family are the ones who are affected by a disaster, helping others can help you deal with your own stress – it may make you feel a little more in control.
- **Write down your feelings.** Writing your feelings down – in a diary, a journal or even on a piece of scrap paper – is a great way to get things off your chest. You can write down how you feel, what's going on in your life or anything else!
- **Stick to your normal routine.** There is comfort in the little things you do every day – so keep on doing them! Take care of yourself. Get lots of sleep, eat well and be physically active.
- **Take a break from the TV news.** Watch a funny movie, get together with friends, or read a funny book or magazine. Too much information about disasters can get you down, so try a change of pace. Did you know that smiling has been proven to improve your mood? That can help you feel like new and take your mind off things for a while.

COPING WITH TRAUMATIC EVENTS: ADVICE FOR MANAGERS

Trauma is the exposure to an extreme stressor involving direct personal experience of an event and/or witnessing an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or threat to one's physical integrity. The person's response to the event may involve intense fear, or helplessness. In turn, the result can overwhelm a person's ability to cope.

Trauma can result from occurrences such as a 'near miss', a severe automobile accident, violent personal assault (e.g. physical attack, robbery, sexual assault, etc.), being kidnapped or taken hostage, terrorist attacks, natural or man-made disasters and many others. Witnessed events include, but are not limited to, observing the serious injury or death of another person due to violent assault, suicide, accident or disaster, or unexpectedly witnessing a dead body or body parts.

Learning about events experienced by others can also result in trauma, and these include learning about the sudden, unexpected death of someone close; learning that one's child has been the victim of a violent criminal act; and so forth. Traumatizing events can take a serious emotional toll on those involved, *even if the event did not cause physical harm*.

It is important for a manager to remember that your employee's perception of the traumatic event can have a significant impact on how they will react, even if it becomes known later on that there was no real threat. People are different, and they will react differently to the same traumatic incident.

THE MANAGER'S ROLE

As a manager, you have an important role in assisting and supporting employees after an incident. Taking control of the situation, without overwhelming the people involved in the incident, takes skill and knowledge about trauma. It is important to know what to look for and to notice signs of distress not only in other people, but also in yourself, so that you can respond most helpfully.

Being aware of the impact that traumatic incidents can have on your employees will help you to manage the situation effectively. It is important to listen to people; to encourage, support and praise people's efforts; and to avoid negative comments, as people often become more sensitive following an incident. Employees who feel supported and valued will likely recover more quickly.



IMMEDIATE SUPPORT

A person who has directly been involved in a traumatic incident may go into shock. Shock can last for up to 72 hours. Symptoms include:

- physical numbness;
- faintness;
- tearfulness;
- flushed or pale skin;
- cold and shivery;
- hot and sweaty;
- shaking;
- talking loudly and/or quickly;
- irritability;
- stillness or becoming silent and withdrawn;
- a sense of things not being real;
- feeling of being outside body; and
- being unaware of others around them.

The following may be helpful to someone immediately following a traumatic incident:

- Take the person to a quiet room, away from the scene of the incident and where there is somewhere comfortable to sit.
- Protect their privacy and keep them away from media intrusion.
- Provide hot drinks or water.
- Provide a blanket or warm coat.
- Normalise and validate what has happened to them.
- Be careful not to trivialise their experience.
- If anyone is shaking, explain that shaking is normal and helps to relieve shock.
- Encourage people to talk about what happened if they want to, but don't force anyone to talk or to listen.
- If the symptoms appear severe to you, or you feel that further treatment is needed for shock or other injury, follow your normal first aid procedures and seek immediate assistance and /or arrange for the person to be accompanied to the hospital.
- When they are ready, and it has been agreed, make arrangements for them to go home.

It is important to arrange a taxi or a lift home with a colleague – never allow someone who has had a shock to get home on their own. Also check whether someone will be at home. If the answer is no, offer to call a friend or relative for them. Check whether they would like someone to go home with them.

FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT: TALKING TO EMPLOYEES

To assist employees to better cope with reactions to the incident, and return to routine duties, managers may wish to access additional support resources as provided by the EAP. Upon contacting the EAP, a trained EAP counselling specialist will help assess the most appropriate clinical response. This may include, for example, a group crisis intervention or a referral for individual counselling.

The key to offering effective support to employees following a traumatic incident is to practice *active listening*. Active listening is an important skill to develop for anyone who manages people. The skill enables managers to offer good support whenever this is needed, but is also useful in all situations where good communication is vital.

What is active listening?

It is giving someone your full attention, putting everything else aside for a time. It involves trying to understand what it is like to be the other person, for example, what it is like to have experienced that incident and to be having this reaction. Many people report that just having someone listen to them is very supportive in itself. Here are some ideas which may help you to listen effectively, so that someone feels listened to and supported:

- Establish and maintain regular contact with the person – give some thought to where you do this – privacy is important.
- Find a time that is good for you (and them), and allow them some time to talk about how they are – ensure that you will not be interrupted.
- If you are seeing them face to face, they may be more comfortable if they are able to bring someone with them.
- Show interest in them and how they are.
- Let them know you are concerned but without being overly curious.
- Encourage them to talk by listening, prompting and encouraging them when necessary.
- Ask general questions.

- Don't ask so many questions that it comes across as an interrogation.
- Check that you have understood correctly by summarising what you think they've said to you.
- Reassure them that their reactions to the incident are normal.
- Offer practical help or advice.
- Don't criticise, blame or label them, or discount what they've said to you.
- Don't make them talk when they don't want to.
- If they want to talk about what happened, but become distressed, it is best to stop them – say something like 'it doesn't seem to be helping you to talk about this at the moment'. A useful question at this point might be to ask them what is helping them to cope – get them to focus on something positive.
- Be supportive and be yourself.
- Remind them of the EAP counselling service – especially if the person is clearly distressed.

Practical questions you can ask include the following:

- How have you been since it happened?
- What can I do to help you?
- What is helping you cope now?
- How are you sleeping?
- Are you able to get out and about?
- How are you feeling about work at the moment?
- Do you have any specific anxieties about work?
- How can I best support you through this?
- Would you like me to refer you for counselling?

Workplace Options (Revised 2015). Coping with traumatic events: Advice for managers. London: Author.



HELPING AN EMPLOYEE RECOVER FROM INJURY OR VIOLENCE

Experiencing a violent incident can lead not only to physical injury, but also to emotional distress. Recovery with return to job effectiveness requires not only the assistance of professional experts such as physicians and psychotherapists, but also the enlightened support of supervisors and colleagues.

The role of the immediate supervisor is especially important, because that person most powerfully represents the organisation to the employee. The supervisor needs to convey personal concern for the employee as well as the concern of the organisation, and a sense of the employee's unique importance to the work group and its mission. The following guidelines have proved helpful in these situations:

If the employee is hospitalised, visit, send cards and convey other expressions of concern. It is important that the employee not feel abandoned. The nursing staff can advise you of the length and type of interaction most appropriate. If the person is quite ill, a very brief visit and a few words of concern may be enough. As recovery continues, sharing news from the office will help the person continue to feel a part of the organisation.

Encourage colleagues to show support. At some point, the employee will need to tell the story of the assault, probably more than once, and may find it easier to discuss this with colleagues who are familiar with the work setting and may have had similar experiences. Colleagues can help significantly by listening in a caring way, showing support and avoiding any second guessing of the situation. Being injured is not only physically painful; it can make the world feel like a cold, frightening place. Simple expressions of kindness from friends and colleagues – a visit, a card game, a funny book a favourite magazine – can help the person regain a sense of safety.

Help the employee's family. If the employee has a family, they may need support as well. If the situation has received media attention, the family may need assistance in screening phone calls and mail. Other kinds of help, such as caring for children while a spouse visits the hospital, can go a long way in showing that the work group cares for its members.



Plan the employee's return to work. The supervisor, employee, employee–labour relations specialist and health care providers need to work together to plan the employee's return to work. Here are some important points to consider:

- There is truth in the old saying about 'getting back on the horse that just threw you', and it can be helpful to get back to the crucial place or activity in a timely manner. The sooner the employee can return, the easier it will be to re-join the group, and the employee will have missed out on less of the current information needed for effective job performance. However, it is important not to expose the employee to too much stress at once. A flexible approach, for example, part-time work, a different assignment at first or assignment of a colleague for support, can often help the employee overcome anxiety and recover self-confidence, and may allow the employee to return to work sooner than would otherwise be possible.
- The employee's physical needs must be clarified with health care providers (e.g. the supervisor and employee should understand precisely what is meant by phrases such as 'light work'). If the employee looks different, from wearing a cast or having visible scars, it is helpful to prepare other employees for this in advance. Advance thought needs to be given to any new environmental needs the employee may have, such as wheelchair access or a place to lie down during the day.
- Working out a flexible plan for a recovering employee may take time and energy in the short run, but that effort will be repaid in the long run by retaining an experienced employee as an integral part of the work group.

Offer counselling. Counselling services should be offered through the employee assistance programme (EAP), and with the attitude that it is perfectly natural to use such professional resources in the aftermath of a traumatic experience. Supervisors and EAP personnel should work together to make the experience as convenient and non-bureaucratic as possible. However, individual preferences and differences should be respected. Some employees find that they can recover from the effects of the experience with the help of their friends, family and colleagues. Others may not feel the need for counselling until weeks have passed and they realise that they are not recovering as well as they would like.

Make career counselling and other forms of assistance available if the employee decides to change jobs. Even with excellent support, employees who have been hurt sometimes feel 'it just isn't worth it', and decide to transfer to a safer occupation. The employee should be encouraged not to make such an important decision in haste, but career counselling and other forms of assistance should be made available. Supervisors and colleagues who have tried to help the employee may need reassurance that their efforts contributed to the individual's recovery, and that the decision is not a rejection of them.

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES AT WORK

Imagine that you, as a manager, are busy with your many daily responsibilities, when tragedy strikes:

- You hear a commotion down the corridor, respond and discover that an employee has swallowed a lethal dose of drugs in the presence of his colleagues.
- An irate individual storms into your work area and stabs an employee while you and other employees look on, shocked and helpless to intervene.
- A dazed-looking employee walks into the work area, bruised and dishevelled, collapses at her desk, and reports that she was attacked while conducting a routine business call.

Initially, your responses will probably be almost automatic. You will notify the proper authorities and take whatever steps are necessary to preserve life and safety.

After the paramedics and the investigators leave, the hard questions begin for you as a manager:

- How do you help your employees recover from this event, so their personal well-being and professional effectiveness will not suffer long-term effects as a result of trauma?
- How do you get your staff moving again after employees have suffered from injury, bereavement or emotional trauma?



As you would expect, there are no easy answers, and each situation presents its own set of challenges. However, there are some general guidelines to help you in most situations:

- **Stay firmly in charge.** Let all employees know that you are concerned and doing all you can to help them. You represent the organisation to your employees, and your caring presence can mean a great deal in helping them feel supported. You don't have to say anything profound; just be there, do your best to manage and let your employees know you are concerned about them. Be visible to your subordinates, and take time to ask them how they are doing. Try to keep investigations and other official business from pulling you out of your work area for long periods of time.
- **Ask for support from higher management.** Relief from deadlines, and practical help such as a temporary employee to lighten your burden of administrative work can make it easier for you to focus on helping your employees and your organisation return to normal functioning.
- **Don't 'keep a stiff upper lip' or advise anybody else to do so.** Let people know, in whatever way is natural for you, that you are feeling fear, grief, shock, anger or whatever your natural reaction to the situation may be. This shows your employees you care about them. Since you also can function rationally in spite of your strong feelings, they know that they can do likewise.
- **Share information with your employees as soon as you have it available.** Don't be afraid to say, 'I don't know'. Particularly in the first few hours after a tragedy, information will be scarce and much in demand. If you can be an advocate in obtaining it, you will show your employees you care and help lessen anxiety.
- **Ask for support from your employee assistance programme (EAP).** The EAP is available to offer professional counselling to those who wish it, and to provide debriefings to groups affected by trauma. Encourage your employees to take advantage of the EAP as a way of preserving health, not as a sign of sickness.
- **Encourage employees to talk about their painful experiences.** This is hard to do, but eases healing as people express their painful thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, and come to realise that their reactions are normal and shared by others. You may want to have a mental health professional come in to facilitate a special meeting for this purpose. Otherwise, your group may prefer to discuss the situation among themselves. Don't be afraid to participate, and to set a positive example by discussing your own feelings openly. Your example says more than your words.
- **Build on the strengths of the group.** Encourage employees to take care of one another through such simple measures as listening to those in distress, offering practical help, visiting the hospitalised or going with an employee on the first visit to a feared site. The more you have done to build a cohesive work group, and to foster self-confidence in your employees, the better your staff can help one another in a crisis.
- **Build on your work group's prior planning.** If you have talked together about how you, as a group, would handle a hypothetical crisis, it will help prepare all employees, mentally and practically, to deal with a real one. Knowing employees' strengths and experience, having an established plan for communication in emergencies and being familiar with EAP procedures can help you 'hit the ground running' when a crisis actually strikes.
- **Be aware of the healing value of work.** Getting back to the daily routine can be a comforting experience, and most people can work productively while still dealing with grief and trauma. However, the process of getting a staff back to work is one which must be approached with great care and sensitivity. In particular, if anyone has died or been seriously injured, the process must be handled in a way that shows appropriate respect for them.

This gives you a general model for management in a traumatic situation. Different types of trauma each present their own specific managerial challenges.

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOVERY AFTER A VIOLENT, TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

Despite the best-laid plans of any organisation, violence can and does happen. Just as agencies develop policies and procedures designed to head off these occurrences, agencies must be equally prepared to deal with the aftermath of such incidents. Quite often, management's focus will be on getting the operational side of the office back in working order. However, just as important as getting the office back online is attending to the impact such incidents can have on office personnel.

MANAGEMENT STEPS TO HELP AN ORGANIZATION RECOVER

Listed below are several initial steps management can take when an incident of workplace violence occurs.

Ensure a management presence in the worksite.

Managers need to spend ample time with their employees, in the worksite or wherever they may be. Employees need to be reassured of their concern, and they need to be able to ask questions. Senior management should ensure that immediate supervisors are supported in this role, relieved of unnecessary duties, and not pulled away from their subordinates to write lengthy reports or prepare elaborate briefings.

Share information with employees.

Employees will have many questions, and they need the answers – often more than once – if they are to resolve the experience for themselves. Information will develop over time, so information strategies need to be simple and fluid. A notice board in the break room or lift, or a recorded message on a hotline number, may suffice for the basics, and a user-friendly system for individual questions needs to be established.

Include union leadership.

Union representatives can help in reassuring employees after an incident and in getting information to employees.



Bring in crisis response professionals.

When an incident occurs, involve the employee assistance programme (EAP) and emergency mental health consultants as soon as possible. They will generally meet with management first, working down the chain, and then with line employees. Based on what the consultants learn, they will offer services such as debriefings and defusings, and informal counselling, perhaps in the work area.

Support informal debriefing.

The formal debriefing doesn't end the recovery process. Provide opportunities for employees to talk informally with one another when they feel a need to discuss the experience. A comfortable break area and flexibility about break times may be all that is needed.

Support caring within work groups.

Keep work groups together as much as possible, and try not to isolate employees from their normal support groups at work. Show respect and support for employees' efforts to care for one another.

Handle critical sites with care.

Initially, the site of a violent incident will be secured as a crime scene. After the authorities are finished with it, management needs to be sensitive to a number of issues. It is helpful if employees don't have to come back to work and face painful reminders such as blood stains or broken furniture. On the other hand, the area should not be so

'sanitised' that it gives the appearance that management is pretending nothing happened. If someone has died, that person's work area will be a focus of grieving, and it needs to be respected as such.

Buffer those affected from post-event stresses.

Effective coordination with the media and timely dissemination of information can help reduce media pressure on those who are the most vulnerable. Assistance with benefits and other administrative issues can reduce the burden on victims and families.

Help employees face feared places or activities.

Returning soon, if only briefly, to a feared site can help prevent lasting effects such as phobic responses. Having a friend or loved one along, or being supported by close work associates, may make the first step much easier.

Remember the healing value of work.

Getting back to work can be reassuring, and a sense of having a mission to perform can help the group recover its morale. The return to work must be managed in a way that conveys appropriate respect for the deceased, the injured and the traumatised.

SUPERVISORS CAN HELP EASE EMPLOYEES' GRIEF

WORKPLACE RECOVERY

Mourning doesn't have to be an awkward topic.

Even as companies bend over backward to help employees manage their family and personal lives, dealing with grieving employees remains a difficult workplace topic. If you've ever found yourself turning down a hall and going the other way to dodge someone who's grieving, you're not alone.

COSTLY BLUNDERS

Why do people have so much trouble comforting colleagues who've suffered a loss?

One reason is that people are afraid of death, and when it touches a colleague, it's a reminder of their own mortality. Because death is such a taboo subject, you aren't sure what to say when we're faced with a grieving person. Colleagues who'll freely discuss intimate relationships become tongue-tied for fear of saying the wrong thing, so they do nothing.

Sadly, this is the worst choice, because it sends a message that they don't care.

Imagine how you'd feel if your parent died, and nobody at the office where you've worked for years said anything about the loss.

Blunders such as these are costly, personally and professionally. It's particularly important that supervisors are knowledgeable about the grief process and show sensitivity and compassion for the bereaved. Most workers feel that bosses, rather than a company policy, set the tone for a workplace response to grief.

Here are some key points for supervisors:

Communicate. Notifying staff is critical. Managers who learn about a death in a colleague's family should ask permission to notify colleagues and of any information the family wishes to disclose (passing along the importance of resisting the urge to probe for details). You may want to designate a person to disseminate information about memorial services. Avoid leaving notification to the grapevine.

Acknowledge the loss. It's important to personally acknowledge the death has occurred. This can be a simple 'I'm sorry', a handwritten note on a desk or flowers. It shows you care about your colleague as a person. Also, permit colleagues to attend the funeral, organise whatever company support is available, and arrange for flowers or other appropriate

acknowledgement from the office as a whole. These gestures are never forgotten.

Understand grief. Supervisors tend to impose unspoken deadlines for healing. It's important to understand that grief is rarely neat and tidy. Be patient, and give your colleague the time needed to get better. Understanding that a colleague will experience the stages of grief – denial, anger, depression, bargaining and acceptance – will help in finding ways to be supportive.

Remember that returning to work doesn't mean the grieving process is over. Everyone grieves in their own way, in their own time. Grief over the loss of a loved one can hit with such staggering force, the ability to work is altered for months or years. In some cases, a grieving worker may find solace in returning to work and appear almost normal for a while, only to fall deeper into grief months later.

Be flexible. Communicate with team members about what has happened, and figure out ways to share the load until the grieving person returns to full strength. One supervisor gets the team together and explains the need to compensate for a member who's grieving, to be sensitive about work demands and to understand it will take time for the person to get back to full productivity.

Ease the workload for grieving colleagues, so they can go home early or offer time off when colleagues are too grief stricken to be effective. Failure to allow extra time can detract from employees' long-term productivity. One grieving person said that going back to work too soon rendered her incapable of giving the job the attention it required. Another person said this: 'It would have been nice if they had trusted me to come in and do the essentials, then leave when I needed to.'

As a supervisor, you may feel torn between showing compassion and protecting the bottom line. As difficult as it may be to disrupt work schedules or put extra burdens on colleagues, the alternative can be worse.

Denying an employee compassion and adequate time to grieve may complicate and slow the healing process. That's a sure prescription for rendering an effective worker incapable, in addition to risking the loss of a productive and loyal employee.

Kelly, L. & Schuette, B. (Ed.) (Reviewed 2015, 18 November [Ed.]). *Supervisors can help ease employees' grief*. London: Workplace Options.

RISK OF EXPLOSIONS FROM BOMBS AND UNUSUAL PACKAGES

Conventional bombs and other explosive devices have been used to damage and destroy financial, political, social and religious institutions. Attacks have occurred in public places and on city streets with thousands of people around the world injured and killed.

Explosive devices can be highly portable, using vehicles and humans as a means of transport. They are easily detonated from remote locations or by suicide bombers.

Learn what to do if you receive a bomb threat or get a suspicious package or letter.

There are also things you can do to prepare for the unexpected. Preparing for such events will reduce the stress that you may feel now, and later, should another emergency arise.

Taking preparatory action can reassure you and your children that you can exert a measure of control even in the face of such events.

BEFORE AN EXPLOSION

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property in the event of an explosion:

- **Build an *emergency supply kit***, which includes items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra torches and batteries. You may want to prepare a kit for your workplace and a portable kit to keep in your car in case you are told to evacuate. This kit should include
 - copies of prescription medications and medical supplies;
 - bedding and clothing, including sleeping bags and pillows; and
 - copies of important documents (passport, driver's license, tax or national identity card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records, etc.).



- **Make a family emergency plan.** Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency:
 - Plan places where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighbourhood.
 - It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
 - You may also want to inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, childcare and school. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one.
 - Knowing your community's warning systems and disaster plans, including evacuation routes.
 - Notify carers and babysitters about your plan.
 - Make plans for your pets.

Bomb Threats

If you receive a telephoned bomb threat, you should do the following:

- Get as much information from the caller as possible. Try to ask the following questions:
 - When is the bomb going to explode?
 - Where is it right now?
 - What does it look like?
 - What kind of bomb is it?
 - What will cause it to explode?
 - Did you place the bomb?
- Keep the caller on the line and record everything that is said.
- Notify the police and building management immediately.

Suspicious Packages and Letters

Be wary of suspicious packages and letters. They can contain explosives, chemical or biological agents. Be particularly cautious at your place of employment. Some typical characteristics postal inspectors have detected over the years, which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

- are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you;
- have no return address or a return address that can't be verified as legitimate;
- are marked with restrictive endorsements such as *Personal, Confidential* or *Do not X-ray*;
- have protruding wires or aluminium foil, strange odours or stains;
- show a city or location in the postmark that doesn't match the return address;
- are of unusual weight given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped;
- are marked with threatening language;
- have inappropriate or unusual labelling;
- have excessive postage or packaging material, such as masking tape and string;
- have misspellings of common words;
- are addressed to someone no longer with your organisation or are otherwise outdated;
- have incorrect titles or titles without a name;
- are not addressed to a specific person; or
- have hand-written or poorly typed addresses.

With suspicious envelopes and packages other than those that might contain explosives, take these additional steps against possible biological and chemical agents:

- Refrain from eating or drinking in a designated mail-handling area.
- Place suspicious envelopes or packages in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents. Never sniff or smell suspect mail.
- If you do not have a container, then cover the envelope or package with anything available (e.g. clothing, paper, rubbish bin, etc.) and do not remove the cover.
- Leave the room and close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- If you are at work, report the incident to your building security official or an available supervisor, who should notify police and other authorities without delay.
- List all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognised. Give a copy of this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.
- If you are at home, report the incident to local police.

DURING AN EXPLOSION

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if things are falling around you. When they stop falling, leave quickly, watching for obviously weakened floors and stairways. As you exit from the building, be especially watchful of falling debris.
- Leave the building as quickly as possible. Stay low if there is smoke. Do not stop to retrieve personal possessions or make phone calls.
- Do not use elevators.
- Check for fire and other hazards.
- Once you are out, do not stand in front of windows, glass doors or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Move away from footpaths or streets to be used by emergency officials or others still exiting the building.
- If you are trapped in debris, use a flashlight, if possible, to signal your location to rescuers.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are.
- If possible, use a whistle to signal rescuers.
- Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause a person to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

- Avoid unnecessary movement so you don't kick up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand. (Dense-weave cotton material can act as a good filter. Try to breathe through the material.)

AFTER AN EXPLOSION

The following things can happen after an attack:

- There can be significant numbers of casualties and/or damage to buildings and the infrastructure. Employers need up-to-date information about any medical needs you may have and on how to contact your designated beneficiaries.
- Heavy law enforcement involvement at local and national levels follows an attack due to the event's criminal nature.
- Health and mental health resources in the affected communities can be strained to their limits, maybe even overwhelmed.
- Extensive media coverage, strong public fear, and international implications and consequences can continue for a prolonged period.
- Workplaces and schools may be closed, and there may be restrictions on domestic and international travel.
- You and your family or household may have to evacuate an area, avoiding roads blocked for your safety.
- Clean-up may take many months.

Ready.gov (Updated 2014, 20 May). *Terrorist hazards: Explosions*. Retrieved 18 November 2015 from www.ready.gov



FIFTEEN TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE DURING TURBULENT TIMES

1. Stay informed of local events. You can't afford to ignore what is happening.
2. If you find out about a rabble-raising group, get on their e-mail list, follow them on Twitter and Facebook. They will usually publicise their activities, giving you a heads up of where to NOT be.
3. Don't assume that you will be singled out for protection by law enforcement.
4. Don't expect sympathy just because you are caught in the middle, even if your children are with you or if you're handicapped.
5. Blend in, if you can, until you can get out. If they're wearing a certain type of clothing, you wear that same type of clothing. If they're carrying a sign, you carry a sign. Whatever they're chanting, you chant.
6. If you are the 'wrong' nationality or race, get out quick. Even a peaceful demonstration can become violent, and your appearance can, and will, make you a target.
7. The larger a group of people, the lower the overall IQ. They will not be thinking rationally about their actions or possible consequences. They also have the cloak of anonymity. This is a scary combination.
8. If you can't get out, take cover and be prepared to defend yourself and your loved ones. If they can't see you, they can't hurt you.
9. If in the middle of a mob, work your way to the outer edges and make your escape.
10. Do not get caught against a wall or fence. You'll be trapped and possibly injured or killed.
11. Take cover, and stay indoors as long as possible. However, if you hear breaking glass or smell smoke, you can probably assume your location is no longer safe.
12. Get in the habit of carrying some safety items you automatically put in your pockets when you leave the house every day, along with your keys and wallets (check the law on what is permitted where you are). A couple of items to consider include emergency cash in smaller bills, or 'industrial strength' pepper spray (you want to think escape, first; defence, second).
13. Another habit is to wear sturdy shoes. If you have to run or walk a long distance, fashionable, flimsy shoes or bare feet may sign your death warrant.
14. Stay up to date with controversial issues. These can trigger random violence as well as organised protests, which can become violent.
15. Stay focused on your goal: staying alive and safe.

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU LOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE ABROAD

Unexpectedly losing contact with a family member or friend who is travelling abroad can be very distressing. This article is designed to provide information about the process to follow if you're concerned about the welfare of a family member or friend abroad or need to get in contact with them urgently.

When people travel abroad, they leave behind their home country's support systems, emergency service capabilities and medical facilities. The home government will do what it can to help families and friends to contact their loved ones. However, they can only provide this assistance where there is a well-founded concern. There are also legal and practical limits to what can be done, and you should have realistic expectations about this.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you become concerned about a person's welfare abroad, there are some initial steps you can take:

- Attempt to phone, text, e-mail or mail the person and their travelling companions.
- Establish contact with family, friends and travelling companions to ascertain if others may have heard from or had contact with the person.
- Check social media sites for information and recent updates.
- Find out from the families of the travelling companions if they have heard from their loved ones.
- Contact their financial institutions to report your concern and to check details of their latest credit/debit card transactions.
- Contact their last known address or employer to seek information about their possible movements.
- Contact their travel agent or airline to report your concern and to seek details of their travel arrangements. You may also be able to place an alert on their airline reservation for the person to make contact should they access their reservation.
- Contact their mobile phone provider to check if there has been any activity on their account.



There are some important things to remember when you begin trying to locate a person abroad:

- Remain calm. Most 'missing' travellers are found safe and well.
- Gather as much information as possible from your enquiries.
- Maintain a record of all the information you gather so you can provide comprehensive details, if required, to others assisting to locate the person.

WHO CAN HELP YOU?

If, after making initial enquiries, you're still unable to locate your loved one or friend and have serious concerns for their safety or welfare, contact your local police station.

You can submit a missing persons report at your local or regional police station. Depending on the information you provide, your local police can determine if it's necessary to lodge a missing persons report with the national consular, travel or foreign-affairs department.

For the police to prepare a report, you'll need to provide as much information as possible about the missing person, such as:

- full name;
- place and date of birth;
- passport number (if known);
- details of any other citizenship or passports held (if known);
- photographs, preferably recent;
- known travel details and plans, including itineraries;
- insurance details, if applicable;
- contact details overseas, such as mobile phone number/e-mail address (include the names and contact details of employers and people they have been travelling with); and
- details about the last contact they made (place, date and time).

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Consular services may only pursue enquiries that are based on a serious concern for the welfare of a citizen overseas and a belief that the person concerned needs consular assistance. If they assess that the missing person overseas needs consular assistance, they may do the following:

- Conduct enquiries using their worldwide embassies, high commissions and consulates to try to locate the whereabouts of the missing person.
- Contact and provide information to you on any developments where permitted.

Privacy provisions operating in foreign countries can severely restrict the information provided to consular staff overseas by local law enforcement agencies.

If your missing loved one contacts you after you have commenced formal enquiries, please inform the consular services and the local police immediately.

PRIVACY OF CONSULAR CLIENTS

Privacy of personal information provided to consular services varies between countries. Depending on the situation, consular officials may be unable to disclose personal information about the 'missing' person, even to their family or friends, without the person's consent. There may be exceptions if this is required by the police, either country's law, or if the life or health of the person or another person is being threatened.

Family members should be aware that if a missing person is located by a consular official and they have exercised their free choice to disassociate themselves from friends and family for legitimate reasons, including removing themselves from harmful environments, the consular official may not be able to pass on personal information.

OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES OF HELP

Depending on the circumstances, there are several other organisations on the next page that may be able to help you search for a missing person abroad.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

International Red Cross/Red Crescent

The International Red Cross/Red Crescent global-tracing network reaches out to more than 185 countries to re-establish contact between relatives separated as a result of war, internal conflict or natural disaster. The service is provided free of charge to the public. Contact your country's Red Cross/Red Crescent service to see if this is offered. Further information and contact details can be found here: <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/protected-persons/missing-persons>.

National Missing Persons Organisations

See if your nation has a specific bureau or non-governmental organisation that helps to locate missing persons. Resources vary widely worldwide, so some countries may offer extensive services and others may not. Your embassy or consulate can provide you with contact details of any relevant local charitable and voluntary organisations specialising in tracing missing persons. They can perhaps pass you information on any locally established private detective industry.

The Salvation Army

If you've lost contact with a family member, the Salvation Army Family Tracing Service may be able to help you locate them through their networks in more than 100 countries. A donation is usually accepted for this work. Look online to see if the Salvation Army operates in your region and find out how to contact them.

International Social Service

The International Social Service traces immediate family members in conjunction with its social work across 150 countries. It requests a contribution towards costs for this work, and they may or may not be operational in your region. Further information and contact details are available on their website (www.iss-ssi.org).

Interpol

If you report the person missing to local or national police, specifically request if they can inform their Interpol bureau, who have resources and jurisdiction to investigate missing persons and liaise with foreign police. Any international police cooperation is agreed and coordinated through Interpol (you should note that Interpol do not accept enquiries from members of the public). To find out more or see Interpol's global database of missing persons, visit www.interpol.int/notice/search/missing.

Google Person Finder

Google Person Finder helps people reconnect with friends and loved ones in the aftermath of natural and humanitarian disasters. If a crisis strikes and people get separated, people can use this service to let the world know they are looking for someone, and travellers can let loved ones overseas know that they are safe. Both individuals and organisations can provide information so people find information about their friends and family: <https://google.org/personfinder/global/home.html>.

GETTING HELP ABROAD

Your home country's government will do what it can to help citizens in difficulty abroad, but there are limits to what can be done. They may be able to provide consular services to citizens who find themselves in trouble, or they may have informal arrangements with other nations' consular services, which can lend assistance. Look up contact information for embassies and consulates across the world on the Go Abroad website: <http://embassy.goabroad.com>.

Those abroad in need of counselling services can try and contact their employee assistance programme (EAP) as well.