

## **Stress and Coping with World Events**

Any traumatic event or fear of the unknown can result in stress and anxiety; it is natural. Finding ways to cope with the stress helps us and the people we care about become stronger and better able to face the challenges ahead.



Any traumatic event or fear of the unknown can result in stress and anxiety, even fear; it is natural. Such feelings can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults as well as children. Finding ways to cope with stress helps us and the people we care about become stronger and better able to face the challenges ahead.

The U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention has provided the following guidance to address stress and anxiety.

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.** How you respond can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

*People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis or uncertain world event include:*

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for contracting certain illnesses, experiencing greater physical ailments, etc.
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to a crisis, such as doctors and other health care providers, law enforcement or first responders
- People who struggle with mental health conditions, including problems with substance use

**If you, or someone you care about, is feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, call:**

- Your country's central emergency number (e.g., 911, 999, 112, etc.)
- Your company's Employee Assistance Program (check with your Human Resources Department if you do not have the contact information for your Employee Assistance Program).
- In the U.S. - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

*Stress in the midst of uneasy world events can include:*

- Fear and worry regarding the health and well-being of you/your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website](#).**

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

*Things you can do to support yourself:*

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about certain events repeatedly can be upsetting and triggering.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to fill your free time with various activities you enjoy.

- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. You can even try discussing subjects other than the current world events.

Understanding the real risks to yourself and people you care about can help make crises less stressful.

***Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.***

### **For Parents and Caregivers**

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal calmly and confidently with difficult circumstances, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

*Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:*

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

*There are many things you can do to support your child:*

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the current issue. Answer questions and share facts in a way that your child or teen can understand.

- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is all right if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.