

Reactions to a Humanitarian Crisis

Hearing about a humanitarian crisis as a result of war or terrorism may be disturbing, especially if you have personal connections to one or more of the countries involved. You may experience emotional reactions, such as:

- ▶ **Feeling vulnerable and insecure.** Watching these events on the news, especially if you have friends or family members there, may affect your sense of personal safety and security. You may find yourself worrying more about loved ones — especially children — when they are not with you.
- ▶ **Fear of the unknown.** Violence is a reminder that you can't control the behavior of others. You may feel uncomfortable in public places or in settings that remind you of the crisis. You may also worry about family members more.
- ▶ **Range of thoughts and feelings.** You may feel a wide range of emotions, including sadness, anger, guilt, frustration, disappointment, and dread. Understand that some people may need to talk about recent events, while others may want to avoid discussing them at all.
- ▶ **Avoiding feelings.** To cope with immediate stress, people sometimes deny their feelings. While this is sometimes a useful short-term strategy, emotions will eventually emerge in other ways. You may experience your reaction through physical symptoms, hyperactivity, or working too much.

- ▶ **Delayed reactions.** If you have suffered past trauma, you may re-experience your emotional responses from that event.
- ▶ **Relating to the experience.** If you or someone you know is directly impacted, or if you identify in some way with the people who were affected, you may have more intense reactions. You may be preoccupied with worry and feel a strong need to reach out to family and friends who may be directly impacted by the crisis or feel anxious while waiting for updates from them.

If you or someone you know is struggling, these steps may help:

- ▶ **Be accepting.** Don't judge emotional reactions or strong feelings as right or wrong. Upsetting events can trigger thoughts and feelings, and everyone will react differently.
- ▶ **Connect with others.** Talking with friends and family is often comforting. When others come to you, listen to their concerns and assure them of your care and your commitment to safety (this is especially important for children). Reach out to LifeMatters for assistance.
- ▶ **Limit media exposure.** If you are feeling overwhelmed by news reports or social media updates, step away from your devices. Take a walk or engage in a relaxing activity instead.
- ▶ **Take precautions.** Focusing on practical safety tips may help you regain a sense of control. It might reassure others, too.

LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to help you cope with your reaction to this or any other difficult event. Please call.

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