



Member Pulse



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Welcome to MHN Member Pulse!

Goodbye, *MHN Member Matters*; Hello, *MHN Member Pulse*!

Welcome to our new member blog – *MHN Member Pulse*!

MHN Member Pulse is your new source for living a healthy, happy and well-balanced life. Every week, we'll feature a new article on emotional health, relationships, work and life, or wellness.

With a fresh look and other updates, *MHN Member Pulse* will also make it easy for you to:

- Read articles on your mobile devices.
- Subscribe to weekly blog updates using an RSS feed
- Go straight to the articles you want to read – without logging in to the EAP member website.

We hope you enjoy the new *MHN Member Pulse*!



After Trauma: How to Help Your Child Cope

As a parent, you want to keep your child from harm. Yet, in spite of your best efforts, your child may have faced a traumatic event, such as a fire, an earthquake or a shooting.

Knowing that your child was in harm's way is upsetting. You want to comfort your child, yet you may not know how. The tips below are a starting point. Keep in mind that your child's age affects how he or she may react to trauma and the kind of help that is best to give.

Pre-school age (up to 4 years)

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, these reactions are common for pre-school age kids after trauma:

- Becoming clingy, quiet or upset
- Acting younger than their age (e.g., wetting the bed or sucking their thumb)
- Thinking the danger isn't over or is nearby
- Not understanding that death means someone is gone forever

How you can help

Consider these tips to help your child cope:

- At your child's eye level, calmly and clearly explain what happened and how your child may be affected.
- Give hugs and tell your child that you will be there to protect him or her.
- Let your child know that the danger is over and that you are far away from the danger.
- After a death, let your child say goodbye in his or her own way. (Make sure the child knows the death is not his or her fault.)
- If your child acts younger than his or her age, let it go. This behavior should pass.
- Keep your child away from media stories about the event.

School age (5–12 years)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network says the following reactions are common for school age kids after trauma:

- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Being afraid to go to school or having trouble staying on task in school
- Feeling like he or she caused the event or that the event will happen again
- Being aggressive or sad
- Complaining about stomachaches, headaches or other physical problems

How you can help

These tips can help your child cope:

- If your child asks about the event, give a clear explanation without the scary details.
- Remind your child that people are working hard to keep families like yours safe.
- Tell your child that the event was not his or her fault.
- Protect your child from media stories about the event.
- If your child complains about a physical problem (e.g., stomachache, headache), keep in mind that your child may be expressing worry that way. That being said, it's a good idea to take your child to the doctor just in case those aches and pains are more serious.
- Lower your expectations of how your child should be doing in school.

Teens (13–18 years)

The following reactions are common for teens after trauma:

- Saying they are not upset and not wanting to talk about their feelings
- Complaining of aches and pains
- Acting in a risky way (e.g., taking drugs or drinking)
- Having nightmares or flashbacks
- Feeling alone, hopeless, angry, or depressed
- Feeling guilty or wanting revenge
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Questioning religion

How you can help

These tips can help your teen cope:

- Limit television and Internet use.
- Share some of your own feelings with your teen.
- Tell your teen that your family is safe.
- Suggest to your teen that writing, art, music, or helping others can heal him or her.
- Lower your expectations of your teen's behavior at home and in school.
- Urge your teen to talk about his or her feelings with friends.

When to seek help

The reactions above are common after a traumatic event. If these behaviors go on for more than a month – or they appear later on – your child may need more help. Call your Employee Assistance Program if you are worried about your child.

Also, remember that taking care of yourself after a traumatic event is important too. By taking care of yourself, you will be better able to care for your child.



Living in an Uncertain World

Watch the news these days and you'll most likely hear about nations at war, a natural disaster, a grim jobs report or crime in your neighborhood. In our connected world, 24/7 access to information can expose us to an ongoing stream of bad news.

And so, we worry.

We worry that we'll lose our job and not be able to find another one. Or that our kids may not be safe at school. Or that sinking stock prices will wipe out our retirement. In an unpredictable world, we never quite know what to expect.

Worry can trigger all kinds of health issues. We may toss and turn at night, or grind our teeth in our sleep. We may start smoking again to "take the edge off" or lose our cool easily.

In an unpredictable world, how can we learn to ease our worries and live with more confidence? Consider these tips:

Most importantly, know what's in your control. The next time you start to worry, ask yourself if you are worrying about something you can control. If yes, take action, and if no, let the worry go. For example, if you're worried about your nest egg, consider talking to a financial planner, taking a personal finance course, paying down debt and starting a side business. Taking action will make you feel more in control and ease your worry.

Filter the news. You may want to stay up to date on the news, but knowing every last detail about a traumatic event halfway across the world may not be helpful to you. Instead, identify what might actually affect you and then take action to address what you can. Again, let go of what you have no control over. For instance, if there is a robbery in your neighborhood, ask your police department if they can do a home security assessment.

Connect face to face. Spend time in person with family and friends. When talking through your worries, identify what is in your control and then brainstorm ways to address those worries. Sure, technology makes it easier to connect, but when you're worried, talking in person can be more comforting.

Get grounded. Watch the sunset or sunrise. Listen to the ocean waves. Snuggle with your pet or loved ones. Savor a cup of tea. These little moments of stability during your day can ground you.

Keep healthy habits. Exercise is a great way to boost your mood and soothe anxiety. Reduce the caffeine and sugar in your diet. Make sure you drink plenty of water and get plenty of sleep. Explore yoga or meditation to calm your mind.

Avoid self-medication. Alcohol and other substances may make you feel less anxious in the moment, but the longer-term consequences are serious. If you become addicted, your health, relationships, career, and finances could suffer. And self-medicating doesn't solve problems; when the effects wear off, you may still be left with an uncomfortable emotion that can actually feel worse from the wearing-off effect.

When to seek professional help

Chronic worry can take a toll. If your worry is chronic, call your EAP for evaluation and a possible referral.



When Anxiety Becomes Too Much

Anxiety has been called the “rust of life.” It can creep up on us, wearing away at our health and our enjoyment of life. In the worst cases, it gets in the way of work and relationships.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 40 million American adults suffer from anxiety disorders each year. Symptoms can include fears of specific things or situations, sudden feelings of panic, or worries that just don’t go away. Fortunately, there are many effective treatments for anxiety disorders. If worries, phobias or similar feelings are interfering with your life, you may benefit from some help. Call your EAP for an evaluation and possible referral.

Strategies for calming anxiety

Even if you do not have an anxiety disorder, anxiety can be hard to handle. Stress and worries can keep you up at night. They can lead you to eat poorly or misuse drugs or alcohol. They can make you feel irritable, depressed and isolated.

So, how can you cope with everyday stresses in healthy ways? Here are a few strategies that can help:

- **Work on being optimistic.** When you catch yourself having a negative thought, come up with a healthier, more positive spin on the situation.
- **Take time to relax.** Make a point of scheduling some quiet time. If music soothes you, have your favorites playing.
- **Bring the laughter back into your life.** A good laugh releases tension. Perhaps you’re a *Napoleon Dynamite* fan. Or maybe it’s anything with the Marx Brothers. Do something to reconnect your funny bone.
- **Take actions that make you feel in control.** Organize your desk and your closet. Sharpen your financial planning skills. Get help caring for your elderly relative, instead of trying to juggle everything alone. If you’re feeling overwhelmed by “life issues,” call your EAP for the help you need.
- **Exercise, eat right and develop other healthy habits.** Exercise is a great way to boost your mood and soothe anxiety. And, living well will give you fewer health problems to worry about!
- **Avoid self-medication.** Alcohol and other substances may make you feel less anxious in the moment, but that initial effect is deceptive. Alcohol actually increases anxiety in the long run, and inhibits your body’s ability to combat stress.
- **Reach out.** The strategies listed above can be helpful, but if your anxiety is intense they may not be enough. If you’re so overwhelmed by worry that you feel you really can’t help yourself, call your EAP right away.



Coping with Change in the Workplace

We all expect change in our workplace and in our work roles. Still, change can be stressful. Change that is unplanned or unwanted can affect your moods and your health. You may feel angry, depressed or unmotivated. You might even notice sleep problems, headaches or loss of appetite.

The good news is that you can control how you react to change. These tips can help you feel calmer, healthier and more committed to work.

Six tips for coping with change

1. **Prepare.** Think about steps you can take to be ready for change. For example, take all the training you can to keep your job skills current and your résumé updated.
2. **Stay positive.** Allow yourself positive and negative feelings during a time of change, but try to stay focused on the positive. Negative feelings like bitterness and blame drain your time and energy. Remember, change can also mean opportunity in the future.
3. **Focus on what you can control.** Many aspects of change are completely out of your control. Pay attention to – and act on – those things in which you can have a positive impact. You will feel more in control of events that affect you personally and professionally. Focusing on what you can control will help to drown out those thoughts that creep in telling you what you cannot control.
4. **Accept change.** If you accept change as a constant in your work life, it's less likely to overwhelm you.
5. **Take care of your health.** Even a short daily walk can reduce stress and anxiety, help you sleep better and increase your appetite. And a gentle stretch can work wonders for muscle aches that creep up during times of stress. A good night's sleep, yoga, meditation, or a massage may also help you feel healthier.
6. **Keep your work and life balanced.** An increased workload may tempt you to bring work home or work long hours. Create time to step away from work demands, to relax and re-energize. Keep in mind that it's even more important to recharge during periods of increased stress.

Yes, change is part of life. But as the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus once observed, “The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it.”

**Getting Started is Easy!
Call your EAP for more information**