



Coping During Times of Crisis

Distressing events and armed conflicts can bring sudden disruptions to daily life, creating feelings of fear, uncertainty, confusion, and grief. Hearing explosions, following difficult news, or worrying about loved ones can affect emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing.

Many members of our community may be affected by these events, even if they were not directly exposed. Feeling impacted during such moments is a natural response to difficult circumstances.

Below are some common reactions people may experience, along with strategies that may help during moments of stress or uncertainty.

Common Reactions During Times of Crisis

Experiencing distress during a crisis is common. Reactions can affect emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and physical wellbeing.

Emotional & Cognitive Reactions

- Anxiety or constant worry about safety
- Feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or out of control
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Sadness, frustration, anger, or emotional numbness
- Feeling “on edge” or easily startled by loud sounds

Behavioral Reactions

- Withdrawing from others or isolating oneself
- Frequently checking the news or social media for updates
- Avoiding certain places or topics
- Difficulty starting or completing tasks

Physical Reactions

- Fatigue, headaches, or muscle tension
- Trouble sleeping or frequent waking
- Changes in appetite
- Increased sensitivity to noises or sudden movements

These reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. They may fluctuate from day to day and may intensify after hearing difficult news or experiencing nearby events.

If these reactions begin to interfere with your sleep, studies, work, or daily functioning, consider reaching out to the Counseling Center for support.



Living Through Ongoing Conflict

When distressing events occur repeatedly over time, reactions may come and go. Some days may feel manageable, while others may feel heavier or more emotionally demanding. These fluctuations are common during periods of prolonged uncertainty.

You may notice reactions such as:

- Feeling constantly alert to loud sounds
- Difficulty relaxing even when you are physically safe
- Emotional numbness or detachment
- Feeling pressure to continue functioning “normally”
- Feeling guilty about being safe when others may not be

These reactions do not mean something is wrong with you. They are natural responses to living through challenging circumstances.

Helpful Coping Strategies

Stay Connected

Sharing with trusted friends, family members, or supportive individuals can help reduce feelings of isolation.

Focus on What You Can Control

Small actions can restore a sense of stability:

- eating regular meals
- checking in with someone
- completing small tasks

Maintain a Routine

Daily routines can provide a sense of normalcy and structure. Even simple habits like regular meals or sleep schedules can be grounding.

Take Breaks from the News

Staying informed is important, but constant exposure to distressing updates can increase anxiety. Consider limiting news exposure to specific times of the day and rely on verified sources.

Practice Self-Care

Engage in activities that help you relax and recharge, such as walking, stretching, journaling, listening to music, or creative activities.

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques help bring your attention back to the present moment when you feel overwhelmed.



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

Use your senses to reconnect with the present moment.

- 5 — Notice five things you can see
- 4 — Notice four things you can touch
- 3 — Identify three things you can hear
- 2 — Notice two things you can smell
- 1 — Focus on one thing you can taste

Deep Breathing

Slow breathing can help calm the body's stress response.

1. Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds
2. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds

Repeat for 1–2 minutes.

Grounding Through Movement

Gentle movement can help release tension and reconnect you with your body.

You might try:

- walking slowly and noticing your steps
- stretching your arms, legs, or neck
- paying attention to how your body moves

Orienting to the Present Moment

If you feel overwhelmed, gently notice your surroundings and focus on what is happening right now.

Some people find it helpful to repeat calming phrases such as:

- "Right now I am safe where I am."
- "I am taking this moment one step at a time."
- "I can focus on what is in front of me."

Different People Cope in Different Ways

People respond to difficult events in different ways. Some may experience strong emotions immediately, while others may focus on daily tasks or feel emotionally numb for a period of time.

Some people may want to talk about what is happening, while others may prefer not to.



There is no single “right way” to cope during times of crisis. Your response may also change from day to day.

Supporting Others While Taking Care of Yourself

During times of crisis, many people find themselves supporting family members, friends, or others in their community.

While helping others can be meaningful, it is also important to take care of your own wellbeing. Taking breaks and focusing on your own needs when necessary helps you remain better able to support others over time.

When to Seek Professional Support

If feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, or emotional distress begin to persist or interfere with your daily functioning, consider reaching out for professional support.