

What You Can Do for Yourself after Loss or Trauma

When you or someone you love experiences a trauma or significant loss, it can be a shock to your whole system. The following are some ideas to cope with what you may be experiencing.

Things that help:

- Eat well-balanced meals. Good nutrition refuels the body and mind to better manage stress.
- Get plenty of rest. Maintaining sleep is essential.
- Exercise regularly. It can help work off some physical stress symptoms, leaving you feeling calmer and better able to relax. If you're feeling lethargic, it can help energize you and clear your mind. Exercise can also help improve sleep.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and to share your feelings with others.
- Do things that you enjoy. Take mini-breaks, go out to dinner, take ten minutes alone, or watch a lighthearted movie.
- Talk with people you trust: your family, friends, or co-workers. Don't be afraid to reach out—people do care, but sometimes don't know how to offer support.
- Structure your time and set priorities. Maintain your basic normal routine, but give yourself permission to skip the extras for a while.
- Make as many small daily decisions as possible to reassert your sense of control.
- Ask for help if you need it. If you are having trouble coping on your own, help is available from many sources.

Things to avoid:

- Don't be afraid to set limits with others when you don't feel like talking. You don't have to discuss the incident or your feelings when you don't want to.
- Don't label yourself as broken. Remind yourself that you are having normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Don't try to avoid or deny reoccurring thoughts or feelings about the incident. They are normal and will usually decrease over time.
- Don't make any major life changes or decisions.
- Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs to numb the pain. It may only complicate or delay your recovery.
- Avoid caffeine, especially if you are having trouble sleeping.

Professional assistance from a counselor may sometimes be helpful. This does not imply weakness; it simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful to handle by yourself. Call the EAP to get started with support.



Washington State EAP is accessible, free, and confidential.
Contact us today at 877.313.4455 or eap.wa.gov