

Building resilience to manage indirect exposure to terror



Acts of terror are purposefully designed to scare people and make them fearful for the safety of their community and their loved ones. The incidents are random, unpredictable, intentional and often target defenseless individuals. When these events occur, it is common to feel anxious and concerned about the future. Being asked to report suspicious activity is meant to make people more aware, and not designed to make them become overly suspicious or worried.

Taking steps to build [resilience](#) — the ability to adapt well to unexpected changes and events — can help people manage distress and uncertainty. Many of these steps are essential ingredients for a healthy lifestyle, and adopting them can improve your overall emotional and physical well-being. After traumatic events, it is helpful to reach out to others and develop empathy. It can also be an opportunity to learn more — find out what scares you and then get information about these types of situations — and to act more — use the information to prepare for the future, make plans for responding and participate actively in the community.

Building resilience

Take a news break. Watching endless news coverage of the attack can make your stress even greater. Although you'll want to keep informed — especially if you have loved ones affected by the disasters — take a break from watching the news. Try to be particularly sensitive to your children's exposure, and be prepared to answer questions they may have about how or why this traumatic event occurred.

Keep things in perspective. While tragic events do occur, they are relatively rare. Remember that government agencies and affiliated organizations have plans in place to prevent attacks and maintain national safety and security. Recognize that trained officials throughout the country are mobilized to prevent, prepare for and respond to acts of terror. Bad things can happen, but it is important to appreciate the many things that are a positive source of well-being and strength.

Have a plan. Having an emergency plan in place will make you feel in control and prepared for the unexpected. Establish a clear plan for how you, your family and friends will respond and connect in the event of a crisis. Have a family or neighborhood meeting to talk about whom to call in emergencies or designate a place to meet if you can't reach someone by phone. Make a plan for your pets and a list of items you will need to take in an emergency. [Red Cross](#) offers information on getting a kit, making a plan and being informed.

Help others. A number of organizations, like the American Red Cross, Medical Reserve Corps and state health and mental health agencies are set up to provide support and aid to disaster survivors. Assisting others in their time of need can also benefit the helper. Volunteer opportunities are often available in your local community, regardless of your proximity to the disaster site.

Keep connected. Maintaining social networks and activities, both in person and electronically, can provide a sense of normalcy, and offer valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you can strengthen resilience.

Building your resilience can be an important part of preparing for the unexpected. It is a psychological tool that can help us deal with anxiety and fear. If you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed and unable to use the tips listed above, you may want to consider talking to someone who can help, such as a [psychologist](#) or other mental health professional. Turning to someone for guidance may help you strengthen your resilience and persevere through difficult times.

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