

Coping Facts for

OLDER ADULTS AFTER A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

Everyone is vulnerable to the unique stressors of COVID19. Generally older adults may exhibit more resilience to disasters due to life experience. Most will recover emotionally after this disaster but healing is individual. Recognize common emotions and behaviors older Missourians may experience due to the pandemic.

BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

Forgetfulness
Loss of interest in activities
Withdrawal and isolation
Reluctance to leave home
Relocation adjustment problems
Embarrassment about receiving “handouts”

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Headaches
Aches and pains
Changes in sleep patterns
Nightmares
Overeating/loss of appetite
Stomach or bowel problems
Worsening of chronic illness
Sleep disorders
Somatic symptoms
Physical or sensory limitations

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

Sadness or Depression
Despair about losses
Apathy
Confusion - Disorientation
Suspicion
Agitation, Irritability
Anger
Fears of institutionalization
Anxiety with unfamiliar surroundings

COVID19 response includes social distancing and connecting virtually through technology. For some, access to technology can be challenging or unavailable which could further isolation. Self-care is important during the pandemic. Know Show-Me Hope is available to assist with healing and recovery.

▼ **Managing Isolation**

It takes courage to reveal thoughts and feelings to someone else. Talking can be comforting and healing. Discussing fear, anxiety or irritability will help recovery.

- **ASK FOR HELP**—Research shows that people who ask for help come through the traumatic experience stronger and healthier than those who view seeking help as a weakness. **Show-Me Hope counselors are available 24/7 at the Disaster Distress Helpline 1/800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66768**
- **CONNECT WITH PEOPLE**—Life will not return to normal overnight. The pandemic is both a historic and stressful incident. Life continues and the threat will end eventually. Stay positive. Do something good for yourself. Stay connected virtually.

▼ **At-Risk Individuals**

Individuals may be at risk if they have experienced the following:

- Series of losses
- Loss of independent living due to traumatic incident
- History of trauma
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Pre-existing medical conditions.

▼ **How to Help Friends or Relatives**

- If confusion is a problem, orient the older adult to the environment by frequent references to the date, time, and surroundings.
- Frequently touch (*as feasible during COVID19*) and call the older adult by name.
- Give additional attention and reassurance.
- Encourage contact with friends and relatives. This will be virtual depending on the phase/geographic impact of COVID19.
- Have someone stay with the older adult regularly, as feasible due to the pandemic.

▼ **When Problems Persist**

- Talk with a Show-Me Hope counselor or mental health professional. Show-Me Hope is a free, confidential service available to all Missourians.
- Show-Me Hope counselors as available 24/7 at the **Disaster Distress Helpline (1/800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66768)** They can assist with stress and anxiety and connect you to local mental health resources.
- If the person talks about suicide, stay with them and get professional mental health help immediately. Call 911 or take them to an emergency room until they can get the proper mental health assistance. Insert in your phone **the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255** for consultation.

For more information,
contact
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