

When Terrible Things Happen: For Students

When a bad thing happens, people have many different kinds of thoughts and feelings. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Some of the ways we respond may be helpful like how being around family and friends can help us feel happy or safe, while some of the ways we respond can make us feel very sad, scared, or angry.

A crisis can affect how you feel, how you think, and how you act.

You may feel confused, worried, shocked, sad, scared, angry, guilty, or numb. Maybe even scared about things that you weren't scared of before, such as being alone, being in the dark, or getting hurt.

You may have feelings in your bodies, such as:

- Being tired
- Headaches or stomachaches
- A fast heart beat
- Feeling jumpy
- Having problems sleeping

You may have thoughts, such as:

- Believing that what happened was your fault
- Images of the bad thing repeatedly popping into your head
- Nightmares
- Worrying that bad things will happen again

You may act differently:

- You may not want to be around family or friends
- You may get into more fights
- You may have a hard time concentrating or getting schoolwork done
- You may not want to talk about, think about, or have any feelings about the bad thing that happened
- You may not have as much fun as you used to
- You may not want to be around things that remind you of what happened

Many of these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors may occur when your reminded of the bad thing that happened. Reminders may include places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings related to the event.

What does NOT help when you are affected by a crisis:

- X Staying away from fun activities
- X Fighting
- X Avoiding thinking about what happened
- X Staying away from family and friends
- X Avoiding asking for help when you need it
- X Using drugs or alcohol
- X Taking risks, such as climbing too high, being careless crossing the street, or driving recklessly

What helps when you are affected by a crisis:

- ✓ Talking to and spending time with family and friends
- ✓ Doing fun things with family and friends
- ✓ Eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising
- ✓ Getting back to a regular schedule—doing things that you would usually do
- ✓ Playing outside
- ✓ Listening to music
- ✓ Keeping a journal
- ✓ Giving yourself extra time to do homework
- ✓ Accepting that you may need extra help temporarily and being willing to ask others for support

It is okay to feel sad or scared after a bad thing happens, but if these feelings get in the way of getting along with family or friends or schoolwork, talk to an adult about your feelings.

Tips for Relaxation

Tension and anxiety are common feelings after crises. These feelings can make it more difficult to cope with the many things that must be done to recover. Using relaxation exercises to calm yourself during the day may make it easier to sleep, concentrate, and have energy for coping with life. These exercises can include slow breathing, meditation, swimming, stretching, yoga, prayer, listening to quiet music, spending time outdoors. Here are breathing exercises that may help:

Adults and Teens	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inhale slowly (one-thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three) through your nose or mouth, and comfortably fill your lungs. 2. Silently and gently say to yourself, "I'm filling my body with calm." 3. Exhale slowly (one-thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three) through your mouth, and comfortably empty your lungs. 4. Silently and gently say to yourself, "I'm letting the tension drain away." 5. Repeat five times slowly.
Children (practice with your child)	<p>Let's practice a different way of breathing that can help calm our bodies down.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I want each of you to think about your favorite color. Okay, we are going to breathe in through our noses or mouths. When we breathe in, we are going to think about our favorite color and the beautiful things you connect with that color. 2. Next, we will breathe out through our mouths. When we breathe out, we are going to breathe out the gray and the uncomfortable feelings that have been building up. Let out the air, slowly and quietly. 3. Let's try it together. Breathe in really slowly and inhale thinking about your favorite color and the beautiful things connected to this color, while I count to three. One, two, three. Good job. Now, while I count again, slowly let the air out while thinking about the color gray and all the unpleasant feelings. One, two, three. Great job. Let's try it together again. [Remember to praise children for their efforts.]

Tips for Families:

- Find a room where everyone can spread out and have his/her own space.
- Some family members will want to lie down, others will want to sit. Some will want to close their eyes, and some will want to keep them open. Encourage everyone to find a way that feels most comfortable to them.
- Take time to practice this when everyone is calm. That way, everyone will be better able to use the breathing exercise when they are feeling upset.
- For young children, turn the breathing exercise into a game. Blow soap bubbles with a wand or blow cotton balls across a tabletop. Get creative and make it fun.