

# CRISIS Support Packet

This packet is intended to provide guidance, information, and resources to support the workplace in the event of a crisis or traumatic event.



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# National Resources For Critical Incidents

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*\*For an immediate emergency situation, always dial 911*

## General Information

Red Cross  
1-800-733-2767  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

FEMA  
1-800-462-7585  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

OSHA  
1-800-321-6742  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

Ready Campaign  
1-800-480-2520  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Disaster Resource  
1-714-558-8940  
[www.disaster-resource.com](http://www.disaster-resource.com)

US Disaster Assistance  
1-800-745-0243  
[www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
1-800-232-4636  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Google Crisis Response  
[www.google.com/crisisresponse](http://www.google.com/crisisresponse)

## Earthquake Resources

US Geological Survey  
Earthquake Notification System  
1-800-329-4085  
[www.ssearthquake.usgs.gov/ens/](http://www.ssearthquake.usgs.gov/ens/)

OSHA Earthquake Guide to Preparation and Response  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/earthquakes.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/earthquakes.html)

## Tsunami Resources

Pacific Tsunami Warning Center  
[ptwc.weather.gov](http://ptwc.weather.gov)

CDC Tsunami Response Emergency Guidelines  
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tsunamis/response.asp>

## Wildfire Resources

CDC Wildfire Emergency Response Guide  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/firefighting/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/firefighting/)

National Interagency Fire Center  
1-208-387-5512  
[www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov)

## Flood, Hurricane and Tornado Resources

OSHA Flood and Hurricane Emergency Preparedness Guides  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/floods.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/floods.html)  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/hurricane.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/hurricane.html)

CDC Storm, Hurricane and Flood Response Resources  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/flood.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/flood.html)

## Terrorism Resources

US Dept. of Homeland Security  
1-202-282-8000  
[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

CDC Terrorism Response Guide  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/terrorresp.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/terrorresp.html)

## Workplace Violence Resources

CDC Occupational Violence Emergency Response Guide  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence)

OSHA Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Guide  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence)

## Coping with National Tragedies

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Feelings of shock, sympathy, grief and other emotional responses are normal in the wake of national tragedies.

At these times it is especially important to remain aware of our internal reactions, try not to over- or under-react, and respond in a way that is most helpful for ourselves, our loved ones and those directly impacted. Below is a list of common reactions and feelings.

### **Emotional Responses**

- Shock or numbness
- Depression and sadness
- Fear and frustration
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Confusion, helplessness

### **Physical Responses**

- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Muscle tension
- Stomach upset
- Difficulty concentrating

### **Behavioral Responses**

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry outbursts, irritability
- Crying
- Decreased energy/ambition
- Relationship conflict

### **Avoid overreacting or under-reacting**

Some examples of overreacting are unnecessarily changing our routines, feeling compelled to stay up-to-the minute on news of the event, pulling children from school or avoiding people, situations or places because of irrational fears. Some examples of under-reacting are denying that the event concerns you, avoiding or shutting down discussion of the event, not reassuring children that they are safe or making humor of the event. Neither overreacting nor under-reacting adequately deal with distress and delay the return to a feeling of safety.

### **Healthy coping strategies:**

- Talk about your concerns with family, friends, or even a professional
- Maintain your normal routine
- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of event
- Protect younger children from frightening news and images, reassure children that they are safe
- Engage in stress management such as exercise, rest and play

Coping with national tragedies can be difficult, but doesn't have to feel overwhelming. Sometimes, it helps to speak with a professional. Contact ACI Specialty Benefits—your Employee Assistance Program—at (800) 932-0034 or [eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com](mailto:eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com).

## Coping With Stress In Troubled Times

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During times of national or even personal conflict, many find it difficult to focus, stay committed, or maintain daily routines. Though challenging, there are ways to cope with the turbulent events that shape today's world. Here are a few healthy and practical tips to help maintain normalcy and to keep moving along during these troubling times:

### **Exercise, Exercise, Exercise!!!**

It cannot be overstated the importance of exercise during stressful times. Regular activity can release anxiety, frustration, and fear. Additionally, it allows one's mind to switch gears from stressful events and gives people a sense of mastery over their environment.

### **Turn Off The TV & Unplug**

Incessantly staying up to date on the latest news and headlines often increases fear, insecurities and irrational thought. Periodically check in for relevant updates, but try to avoid watching or browsing news obsessively.

### **Remain Connected**

It is extremely important to discuss issues with those close to you, especially family, friends, and neighbors. The act of simple dialogue can do wonders in reducing stress levels! You will find that these acts provide a sense of connection to others who are experiencing similar emotions. Avoid, however, engaging in emotionally charged debate, as this will only aggravate feelings of stress.

### **Set Aside Relaxation Times**

Remember to engage in leisure activities that can get your mind off the stressful events. These may include going to a museum, watching a movie, attending a concert or festival, or any number of activities that give you the opportunity to relax.

### **Your EAP Can Help**

If emotions overwhelm you or someone you love, don't wait. Make an appointment for counseling now. Your employee assistance program is a vital, available resource, ready to help in these troubling times.

Call ACI at 800-932-0034 or email [eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com](mailto:eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com).

# Talking To Children About Traumatic Events

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Can we shelter children from trauma caused by natural disaster, war, terrorism and other difficult events? Not likely. Even favorite cartoons may be interrupted with “breaking news” and disturbing images. So, while it is helpful to monitor your child’s media exposure during times of conflict, it is also important to encourage your child to share ideas so that you, as a parent, can respond.

How can you know your child’s level of understanding and fears in order to offer assurances of safety, no matter his or her age? Here are some practical suggestions to help parents communicate with children about current events, crises and traumatic events.

## Young Children (Preschool-Elementary)

- **Monitor TV exposure:** Replayed violent images make events closer to home than they really are. Very young children do not yet have the ability to separate facts from fantasies.
- **Use art to make statements about feelings:** Having a young child draw what scares them rather than explain can be much easier for them to express.
- **Listen to their feelings:** Children respond best to open forums, while lectures and avoidance can create a sense of danger.
- **Correct misinformation:** Children interpret things in ways adults would never imagine. Help clarify circumstances to dissolve lingering worries with your child.

## Adolescents and Teenagers (Jr. High, High School)

- **Get your news with the children:** This allows them to openly express their opinions comfortably and lets you know where they stand on the issue.
- **Don’t express your opinions in absolutes:** At this age children are learning to think critically. Discuss facts first, then open the floor to opinion and ideology.
- **Listen to your older children:** It’s important for them to know that their thoughts, opinions and fears are recognized.
- **Support action:** When older children cope by taking action in difficult times, support their willingness to tune in with their feelings.

## How To Help

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### **Locating Loved Ones**

For those directly affected by a crisis, or those with family or friends directly involved, Google has opened a “Person Finder” page available as a resource to help locate people in the areas affected by a disaster.

Inquiries concerning US citizens living or travelling abroad should be referred to the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at the US Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or (202) 647-5225.

### **Giving Aid through Charitable Organizations**

In the event of a traumatic event, there are many organizations beyond the government who offer channels for aid and donation to give to those most affected by the traumatic event. The contact information for these organizations is provided below and they will be able to assist and provide further details on the specificity of the crisis situation.

**AMERICAN RED CROSS:** Red Cross offers the convenience of simply texting ‘REDCROSS’ to 90999 to make a small \$10 donation, and also offer a link on their website at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) where people can choose to donate their time and/or money to a range of crises worldwide. The Red Cross can also be reached at 1-800-733-2767.

**GLOBALGIVING.ORG:** GlobalGiving is working with International Medical Corps, Save the Children, and other organizations on the ground to disburse funds to organizations providing relief and emergency services to victims of the natural disasters and other traumatic events. Donors can text \$10 donations, and larger increments can be submitted on GlobalGiving’s Website.

**THE SALVATION ARMY:** The Salvation Army is always on hand in the event of a large-scale traumatic event. Donations can be made through designated text messages (message and number changes for each crisis), on the organization’s Web site at [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org) or by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY.

**The following information is for  
Managers, Supervisors  
and Human Resource Professionals**

# Recognizing Distressed Employees

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## What are the Symptoms of a Distressed Employee?

- More frequent absenteeism may occur. Worrying causes stress which can ultimately cause physical symptoms and ailments. Illness is also perpetuated by depression.
- Employees may begin working more slowly. The combined effect of checking up on the latest news and constant concern while engaging in tasks can slow down productivity.
- Becoming numb and emotionless. This defense mechanism is an attempt to shut out stimuli and events which may be affecting the individual.
- Understand that employees with existing anxiety and those with personal connections to the events may be most affected and at increased risk of developing these symptoms.
- Affected employees may begin missing deadlines and withdrawing from their work activities, more frequently than before.
- Some employees may actually become involved in overworking as a coping mechanism, displaying increased productivity.

**Remember:** responses vary. Individuals vary greatly in their observable responses to traumatic events. Most of us will cry, threaten, talk, or become very silent, and then move on. While we experience highs and lows during the day, we outwardly exhibit control, or at least reactions within a normal range. What about those who do not?

## Symptoms that may indicate a need for professional assistance and possible referral to the EAP or other mental health resource:

- An inability to stop talking about the events, even a seemingly morbid or obsessive preoccupation with the more tragic and dramatic portions of the occurrence.
- Recurring thoughts, nightmares and daydreams that interfere with sleep, work, and concentration.
- Experiencing irrational fears beyond a few days.
- Feeling scattered, unable to concentrate, having difficulty remembering, or having trouble making simple decisions—all are symptoms that, in combination with others, should be addressed professionally.
- Feeling extremes of emotions—numbness, withdrawal or indifference on one end of the scale and rage, violence, hatred on the other, may signal a problem.
- Being unable to separate from children or loved ones, becoming overly protective, and avoiding activities.
- Spontaneous crying, agitation, feeling deep despair and hopelessness.

This list may seem long and most of us have experienced one or more of these symptoms at times. The manager's role is **identification not diagnosis**. An employee who is exhibiting these symptoms to the point of gaining the attention of a manager, supervisor, lead or peers, should be referred to the EAP or other mental health resource for evaluation. Accepting such a referral is a choice.

## Where To Go During A Crisis

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In the event of a crisis or traumatic event, employees will often look toward those in supervisory positions to determine their next course of action and how to stay safe. Each type of disaster calls for its own set of emergency responses to ensure the safety and protection of all employees, but there are certain preparations that can be made that will help assist businesses no matter what the circumstance. Here are three main points geared for business disaster preparedness offered by the experts at FEMA and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov):

### **Make a Plan**

Preparation is about expecting the unexpected. When proper plans are made people know where to go and the anxiety of the situation can be much more easily managed in a calm, prepared environment. In the event of an earthquake, hurricane, tsunami or tornado, know where the safest evacuation locations in the building are located, and make sure emergency tasks are designated to employees before disaster strikes.

### **Practice**

Now that the plan is established, it is time to put it into action. Conduct regularly scheduled education and training seminars as well as walk-through drills. If your business shares a building with another business make sure to coordinate emergency plans, and when hiring new employees make it a priority to bring them up to speed. Evaluate and revise plans as needed subject to analysis of plan in practice as well as updated professional emergency preparedness information.

### **Protect Your Investment**

Beyond emergency planning, there are many safeguards businesses should take to secure their assets. These safeguards include ensuring adequate insurance coverage, addressing the preparations needed to withstand extended utility outages, and conducting a room-by-room assessment to determine which physical assets need to be secured.

America's businesses form the backbone of the nation's economy; small businesses alone account for more than 99% of all companies with employees, employ 50% of all private sector workers and provide nearly 45% of the nation's payroll. If businesses are ready to survive and recover, the nation and our economy are more secure. A commitment to planning today will help support employees, customers, the community, the local economy and even the country. It also protects your business investment and gives your company a better chance for survival.

# The Manager's Role In Helping Employees Cope With Fear

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MANAGING EMPLOYEES who have been traumatized by past or current events, or experiencing anxiety toward events of the future, is both a problem and an obligation. Managers play an important role in providing leadership through events that may have little to do with their personal experience and training. Employee fears as well as real threats of danger pose immediate and long-term challenges to those who supervise others.

During times of crisis, managers must ask themselves what level of performance they can expect of employees who are afraid, what is realistic in balancing the emotional needs of the work group with the demands of the job, what is the possibility of danger to the worksite, how much talk is enough—and much more. And, they must figure out how to foster both teamwork and commitment among those they supervise -- qualities that will be crucial for coping with fear.

## **Leading the Work Group in Traumatic Times**

*Develop a Corporate Strategy.* Crisis is not the time for managers to lock themselves away and have lengthy strategy meetings. It's a time for them to listen and show their presence. Have brief meetings focused on: a preparedness plan, policies regarding absenteeism, and effective strategies to address employees coping with difficult emotions.

*Communication is Key.* It may help to hold social activities and forums for management and employees to engage in informal discussion and offer reassurance. The EAP can provide crisis support with on-site counselors as well as trainings on such topics as Stress and Anxiety Management, Coping with Change, Parenting in Troubled Times, and more.

*Try Meeting with Small Groups.* A variety of feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Give employees the time and tools to process feelings and let them know it is okay to ask for help. Provide information about available resources, including the employee assistance program. Avoid over-reacting or under-reacting, as these approaches usually only increase anxiety and fear at the workplace.

*Think positively.* Realize that things will get better and set a positive tone, while being realistic and flexible about the time it takes for individuals to cope.

*Limit exposure to media coverage.* With the 24/7 news cycle, it's easy to get caught up in looking up the latest news and updates. Make periodic announcements of relevant information, but don't encourage employees to watch or browse news excessively.

*Stay Focused.* Make efforts to maintain regular routines. By working, maintaining dignity and productivity, listening with sensitivity, and being courageous managers and supervisors—team leaders and bosses—can set the example for the workplace.

The employee assistance program can provide additional management consultation and support regarding managing in times of crisis. Contact your account manager to learn more. Call ACI at 800-932-0034 or email [eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com](mailto:eapinfo@acispecialtybenefits.com).

To learn more about your  
EAP services and  
resources, call now.

**800.932.0034**  
[www.acispecialtybenefits.com](http://www.acispecialtybenefits.com)

