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### DISASTER

Natural disasters are described as events that suddenly appear in a certain area, causing loss, disrupting life and compelling one's coping skills. It can cause traumatic effects because it contains conditions that negatively affect the physical, social, emotional functionality or mental well-being of the individual.

Common responses to a traumatic event, within the framework of emotions, thoughts and behaviours, can be listed as follows:

- Temporary shock, fear, anger, guilt, shame, helplessness and/or hopelessness
- Confusion about place, time or space
- Insomnia and sleep problems
- Loss of appetite or increased appetite
- Indecision, inability to concentrate, forgetfulness, general disinterest
- Disruption of the immune system
- Restlessness, mistrust, alienation from people, sudden outbursts of anger
- Feeling abandoned or left-off, being overly judgmental and accusatory
- Physical pain and aches, irregular heartbeat, nausea, change of appetite, sudden chills

## WHAT IS SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS?

Since some traumatic experiences are experienced massively as a collective trauma, listening to the details of the event or watching the images can affect people negatively to varying degrees, even if the trauma is not directly experienced. It should not be forgotten that this process in which the person may feel scared, helpless and depressed is normal. However, if your stress symptoms do not decrease over time and affect the functionality of your daily life negatively, it would be beneficial to seek professional support.

However, it is normal and expected to see such behaviors in people immediately after disasters. Such reactions are described as "normal responses to an abnormal event".

# HOW CAN WE SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED A TRAUMATIC EVENT?

- Instead of an approach that tries to find a solution, listening to the person and making them feel supported is one of the most important requirements.
- A supportive attitude should be assumed with understanding and patience, avoiding a judgmental and questioning attitude.
- The reactions of people after a traumatic experience may differ. While some are willing to express their feelings and thoughts; it should be taken into account that this can be challenging for some others.





- Although social support is important, it should be possible for the person to spend time with themself from time to time.
- With the permission of the person, a supportive role can be assumed to help them continue their daily routines, such as sleeping, eating and self-care.
- Forcing people to feel and think positive, distracting the person's attention, oppressive and insistent behaviors should be avoided.
- Even though their communication seem to decrease over time or it feels like they are moving away from you, it is necessary not to rush and give them time

# HOW SHOULD BE APPROACHED SOMEONE WHO LOST A LOVED ONE?

The most basic need of someone who has lost a loved one is to feel their feelings are understandable. A sincere condolence phrase or physical contact with the permission of the person, such as holding their hand, touching their shoulder or hugging them would be appropriate behavior. People who have not yet overcome the shock of the event may exhibit aggressive behavior, cry constantly or show reactions such as freezing. It is necessary to open up space for the person to share what they feel and to allow them to display their own reactions without judgment. Some people who have lost their relatives may hesitate to communicate. We can emphasize that we are there for them without forcing them to speak.

## WHAT CAN WE DO FOR OURSELVES?

#### **GIVE YOURSELF TIME**

You may go through a stressful period after the disaster and show intense emotional reactions to what you have experienced. Don't suppress your emotions, give yourself time to understand what's going on around you. Remind yourself that even if you have difficulties, you can overcome them. Do not force yourself for a "complete recovery". You may feel the impact of the disaster on you for a long time. Your goal should be to feel balanced instead of feeling good.

## TRY TO CONTINUE WITH YOUR DAILY LIFE

Although it is difficult to return to your routine work, it contributes greatly to your normalization process. Don't feel guilty about doing activities that are good for you.

## SPEND TIME WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

It is very important to be in contact with others, to feel that we are not alone, and receive the emotional support we need. Talk to your loved ones about your experiences, thoughts and feelings. It is quite normal to want to be alone sometimes, but be careful not to distance and isolate yourself from your loved ones.

#### **USE SOCIAL MEDIA HEALTHILY**

When we are exposed to too many stimuli, our body and mind can feel stuck; symptoms such as increasing physical pain, confusion, intense guilt and anger, extreme fatigue, and reluctance can be observed. Although it is not easy to determine the boundary between our need for information and feeling overloaded, it is an important point to consider.

## TRY TO RELAX YOURSELF WITH SIMPLE TECHNIQUES

Listening to relaxing music, taking a walk, focusing on a feel-good object/image, drawing/scribbling, hugging, breathing and relaxation exercises can help you regulate. You can also express your feelings and thoughts by writing to clear your mind.

#### **CONSULT AN EXPERT**

If, within a few weeks, despite following the recommendations here, the negative psychological effects of the event continue and you feel that you cannot cope with the psychological trauma you have experienced, you can seek support from a mental health professional.

#### REFERENCE

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