

Coping with Crisis in the Media

The news is usually full of stories about negative things like earthquakes, hurricanes, disease threats, bombings, kidnappings and war. It can seem like frightening events and disasters are happening all around you, even in places where you normally feel safe, like work, home or on campus. Experiencing these things firsthand or even seeing them on TV, can cause you to feel worried or scared.

What to keep in mind as you see and hear bad news:

- **Atypical news gets attention** – Everyday activities aren't exciting to watch, but out-of-the-ordinary events, like airplane crashes, grab people's attention. It may lead a person to think crashes happen all the time, but the reality is planes take off and land safely continuously, but that's not newsworthy.
- **The news stations like to dwell on tragedies and disasters** – Keep in mind, many news shows run 24/7, so stations continue to report on the same story, over and over again, often for days at a time.
- **Sometimes bad news is good to know** – News about natural disasters, a string of burglaries in your neighborhood or impending storms keeps you alert and helps you take precautions to be safe.
- **Disasters or tragic events can bring out the best in people** – While firefighters and police officers are busy doing their life-saving jobs, news of disasters often moves regular citizens to volunteer to help victims and encourages neighbors, families and friends to help one another.
- **Seeing the same bad news story repeatedly can make you anxious and depressed** – If you find this happening to you, limit the amount of time you spend following a story. Also keep in mind that children aren't always able to distinguish that it's the same event being repeatedly covered. Limit their viewing and take time to explain to them.

Weave your own safety net:

These tips can help you keep a healthy focus on day-to-day living, even during stressful times:

- **Talk to your friends and family** – If you feel unsafe, worried, scared or confused, talk to those closest to you. Sharing your feelings with friends and family helps you realize you are not alone and makes you feel safer.
- **Help others in need** – Sometimes when you're concerned or stressed about troubling events, it's helpful to offer support to others; doing this can even help you feel a little more in control. Volunteering at shelters, raising relief funds, donating clothes or organizing an event like a food drive are all ways to focus outward.
- **Write down your feelings** – Even if writing isn't normally "your thing," putting your feelings into words in a journal is a great way to process thoughts and feelings privately. Record both positive and negative experiences.
- **Stick to your normal routine** – There is comfort in doing everyday tasks like housecleaning and cooking; physical activity and even getting a good night's sleep are good stress-relievers and distractions as well.
- **Take a break from TV news** – Too much information about negative events can get you down.
- **Don't be afraid to talk it out with a professional** – If you feel overwhelmed, it's OK to ask for help. A visit with a professional can help make sense of difficult feelings.

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