

Tips for responding constructively to disaster, tragedy or injustice

When bad things happen, like a violent tragedy or great injustice, it can be very helpful to find something positive to do in response.



Responding constructively to disaster, tragedy or injustice

- Challenge stereotyping, narrow analyses of the problem, disaster or crisis, and blaming of whole groups for the actions of few.
- Be careful to separate angry thoughts and feelings about specific people who behave in cruel ways from the larger cultural or religious group to which those people may belong.
- Talk about the issues that the event raises. By talking to each other we can come to recognise and acknowledge the very real, appropriate and adaptive concerns that we have about violence and injustice. Only when these concerns become a daily reality in our minds will we be motivated to take action.
- Talk about how to treat others and share values about what sort of a society you want to have.
- Have a frank discussion about realities in society, and the ways in which some people who live in this country are treated. Hate and prejudice are not innate but learned. No one deserves any act of violence for their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, or other beliefs.
- Define the problem group (e.g. bigots, haters, terrorists, violent activists) narrowly. A narrow definition reduces the problem's impact and the potential leverage of people advocating or using violence.
- Remember that people who advocate hate and violence are a tiny minority. It's a problem, but it's a small problem relative to many other challenges we face in society like homelessness, poverty, discrimination, or environmental destruction.
- Discuss the importance of encouraging peace and non-violence at all levels of society.
- Promote understanding of people from different groups.
- Support ways that strengthen people's cultural identities.
- Learn conflict resolution skills.
- Remind yourself and others of the goodness of people. The world is largely a safe place, people are usually good, and life is worth living.
- Look for the helpers and the people doing kind or heroic things in response to the tragedy.

- Find ways of helping more and showing acts of kindness to others in your community or in other parts of the world.
- Show increased appreciation for relationships and loved ones.
- Become an ally to other people and minority groups who might be in need of support, including those of which you are not a member.
- Find something positive to do in response to distressing world events, so you feel like you can make a positive difference in the world, like volunteering in the community to help others, donating money to emergency organisations.
- Stand up for and speak up for others who you see being bullied or targeted.

For more information about the APS disaster recovery resources please visit psychology.org.au/topics/disasters/