



# Mental Health Resources for Survivors of Mass Shootings

**We are Here to Help.**

*Mental health and well-being resources to help you stay balanced during an emotionally challenging time.*

The threat of mass shootings can weigh heavy on the minds of Americans across the country. Managing and protecting your team is paramount in such an unpredictable atmosphere, and you may be feeling overwhelmed when it comes to preparing for a worst-case scenario.

We understand how vital safety is for everyone at work— which is why we have prepared this comprehensive guide with resources you need to respond quickly and safely during a mass shooting event.

## What to do if you find yourself in a mass shooting event

From creating emergency plans for evacuation scenarios, providing mental health support after traumatic events, to maintaining open communication between staff throughout any incident response process – our guide focuses on constructing protocols that create a safe workplace environment out of chaos.

### Avoid the Area

The first and most important thing you can do if you find yourself near a mass shooting event is to avoid the area. This may seem like an obvious suggestion, but it is important to remember that your safety is always the priority. If you are able, try to find a safe place to take cover, such as a nearby building or vehicle. If you are unable to avoid the area, make sure to stay out of sight and keep as quiet as possible.

### Be Aware of Your Surroundings

If you find yourself in an area where a mass shooting is taking place, it is important to always be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention to any exits or potential hiding places that might be available to you. If possible, try to have a plan in place in case you need to quickly escape or take cover.

### Do Not Panic

If you find yourself in the midst of a mass shooting, it is important to remain calm and not panic. Panicking will only make it more difficult for you to think clearly and make decisions that could potentially not save your life. Try to stay as calm as possible and focus on what you need to do in order to stay safe.

### Follow the Instructions of Law Enforcement

If you find yourself in a position where you are able to help others who are near the mass shooting event, do so if it is safe for you to do so. Remember that your safety is always the priority, so only help others if it will not put yourself in danger. There may be injured people who need help getting to safety or people who are scared and need someone to calm them down. If you are able, offer whatever assistance you can.

### Seek Help After the Event

Once the immediate danger has passed, it is important to seek out professional help if needed. Many people who experience trauma from a mass shooting event will suffer from long-term effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If you find that you are struggling emotionally or mentally after a mass shooting event, reach out for help from a professional.



## Managing Your Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting

In the wake of a devastating shooting, it's no surprise that so many feel overwhelmed with confusion and deep emotions. From shock to sadness to sheer anger, these feelings are normal as we attempt to make sense of what has happened. But how can we help ourselves and our colleagues process these emotions when the news feels too heavy? Let's explore strategies for navigating the emotional aftermath of such tragedies.

### Understand Your Feelings Are Normal

It is important to recognize that when faced with tragedy, there is no "right" way to feel. Shock, sadness, anger, guilt, and despair are all valid reactions; however you may experience them at different levels depending on your own history and circumstances. It is essential to be gentle with yourself in moments like these as you allow yourself time and space to process your feelings without judgement or expectations. You should also feel comfortable reaching out for support from friends or family—you don't have to go through this alone!

### Allow Yourself Time to Heal

It can take some time before things begin feeling "normal" again post-tragedy. Don't rush your healing process—give yourself permission to take any breaks that you need and take things one day at a time. Aim to create a routine for yourself that involves activities that bring you joy or peace (like yoga, meditation, or journaling), while still being mindful not to over-work yourself; if you find that tasks prove too difficult after an event like this then don't be afraid to ask for help! This is especially true at work where colleagues should be encouraged to look out for each other during emotionally trying times.





### Stayed Informed Responsibly

Although it can sometimes be tempting to stay glued to the news cycle when something devastating like this happens, it is important not to get caught up in an endless scroll of updates and reminders of the tragedy itself. Everyone processes information differently but try not to become overwhelmed by consuming too much news related content; instead focus on staying informed through reliable sources only when necessary—your mental health should always come first!

Tragic events like shootings will inevitably evoke strong emotions in us all as we grapple with making sense of what has happened and why it has happened. Remember that whatever emotions you experience are normal responses in moments like these; allow yourself time and space to heal from the situation while also understanding that our collective healing takes place together as well—show kindness towards those around you who might be struggling more than usual during such trying times. Despite everything it is still important for us all to remember how far we have come as a society even despite certain tragedies—we must continue striving towards a brighter future together even during our darkest hours!

## Advice on How to Talk to Children About Mass Shootings

As adults, it can be difficult to talk to children about mass shootings because we don't have answers ourselves!. Here are a few tips for explaining a mass shooting event to your children or children in an age-appropriate and comforting way.

- Listen to them as they talk or ask questions
- Talk openly in an honest way without going into too much detail
- Focus on comforting children and reassure them that they are safe and will continue to stay safe
- Tell the truth about what occurred but talk in a caring and sensitive manner
- Remind your kids that you love them and will do anything to protect them

Above all, emphasize that despite these terrible acts of violence, good people in the world are taking steps to mitigate the chances of something like this happening again. Encourage your children to “find the helpers.”



## Resilience: Learn to Bounce Back

Why are resilient people happier? Some people in life show exceptional resilience. They have the strength and passion to go on, even in the face of tragedy. Below are some habits of extremely resilient people. To start increasing your own resilience and happiness, choose one habit to start practicing and then add more habits as you go.

**Get The Support You Need.** People with exceptional resilience typically have a big safety net—many loved ones and friends to turn to when times get tough. Having others who accept you for who you are and who are there for you during good and bad times strengthens your resilience. Don't have a social net? Get out there and join a group or team.

**Realize It's Just Part of Life.** Resilience comes with knowing that life isn't perfect and that, yes, there will be drama and trauma in your life at one time or another. Your ability to view a tragedy as an isolated event instead of what your future has in store for you is what will set you up for success and greater resilience in the future.

**Make Healthy Choices.** People who are extremely resilient typically take care of themselves. They exercise daily, get the rest they need, address their own needs and feelings regularly, and make an effort to eat healthy. If you take care of yourself—even walking 20 minutes a day can take your stress down a notch—you will be less likely to fall apart during those times in your life that are filled with stress or tragedy.

**Remember to Laugh.** Even during the worst times, exceptionally resilient people still laugh and find joy. Laughter can reduce the pain you feel, both body and mind, and help to minimize the issue at hand. Yes, bad things will still happen, but you can lighten that load by finding your sense of humor.

**Be Nice to Others.** Exceptionally resilient people enjoy helping others. They find great joy in random acts of kindness that lift the heart of not only the receiver but also the giver. On the flip side, it is equally important to receive and appreciate kindness from others who are trying to help you during a tough time—showing gratitude is also a big part of resilience.

**Get the Ball Rolling.** Resilient people face life's obstacles head-on. When confronted by a crisis, they immediately ask themselves, "What are my choices and solutions for this?" They collect all the information they can, come up with a plan, and then face the pain or anxiety directly with action.

**Look On the Bright Side.** Resilient people have a knack for always finding the silver lining. Even though they are not immune to pain and anxiety, their eyes are open—they are able to see the good even during the worst times. Resilient people literally see each moment in life as another opportunity and another chance. Their glass is definitely half full.

Remember that resilient people learn from their mistakes instead of making the same ones over and over. They ask themselves what went wrong and come up with a strategy to prevent the mistake from happening again. They get excited about doing things in a new way or approaching things differently, and this is what helps them endure challenging times.

We are here for you and your family.

Call Uprise Health: 1-800-395-1616

[members.uprisehealth.com](https://members.uprisehealth.com)



## Friends & Family Can Help After a Traumatic Event

### Help Them Support You

Your friends and family can offer you support after experiencing a traumatic event. They will be very concerned about you, and you can help them support you by letting them know how you are feeling. Even though they care, they didn't experience the trauma with you. It's okay to remind them about your experience and ask them to be patient as you recover. This will help them help you. Share this toolkit with them so they know what to expect and how they can offer support as you need it.

### Explain Your Feelings

Tell your friends and family you have gone through a traumatic experience. Let them know that you will need their support and understanding to cope and recover, and that it may be weeks, or even months, before the effects of this experience have diminished. Also let them know you may be experiencing some of the following feelings and behaviors:

- Increased anxiety or fear
- Short temper or irritability
- Nightmares and sleep problems
- Confusion and/or short term memory loss
- Difficulty making decisions
- Fear of being alone
- Physical aches and pains
- Tendency to withdraw

### Tell Friends & Family How They Can Help

"I might be feeling or acting differently for a while. Here are some ways you can help when I'm struggling:"

- Be patient - don't just tell me to think positive
- Listen and try to understand my feelings
- Ask how you can help
- Temporarily take over some of my responsibilities
- Help me feel safe again: *(Drive me to work, help me feel safe by installing new safety precautions at home such as door locks, run errands with me, or just spend some extra time with me.)*

**A traumatic event can trigger memories of other unrelated traumas, such as an illness, injury, or the past death of a loved one.** If you are having other traumatic memories, tell someone. Your friends and family can only help if they know what you are dealing with. So if your feelings or behaviors are changing or getting worse, let someone know so they can support your needs.

If you don't feel comfortable talking to your friends and family, or if you need more help than they can offer, you should **reach out to professionals by calling the EAP.**

## 21 Things You Can Do While You're Living Through a Traumatic Experience

1. Take immediate action to ensure your safety and the safety of others. If it's possible, remove yourself from the event/scene in order to avoid further traumatic exposure.
2. Address your acute medical needs (e.g., If you're having difficulty breathing, experiencing chest pains or palpitations, seek immediate medical attention).
3. Find a safe place that offers shelter, water, food, and sanitation.
4. Become aware of how the event is affecting you (i.e., your feelings, thoughts, actions, and your physical and spiritual reactions).
5. Know that your reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event. You are not "losing it" or "going crazy."
6. Speak with your physician or healthcare provider and make him/her aware of what has happened to you.
7. Be aware of how you're holding-up when there are children around you. Children will take their cues from the adults around them.
8. Try to obtain information. Knowing the facts about what has happened will help you to keep functioning.
9. If possible, surround yourself with family and loved ones. Realize that the event could be affecting them, too.
10. Tell your story. And, allow yourself to feel. It's okay not to be okay during a traumatic experience.
11. You may experience a desire to withdraw and isolate, causing a strain on significant others. Resist the urge to shut down and retreat into your own world.
12. Traumatic stress may compromise your ability to think clearly. If you find it difficult to concentrate when someone is speaking to you, focus on the specific words they are saying and work to actively listen. Slow down the conversation and try repeating what you have just heard.
13. Don't make important decisions when you're feeling overwhelmed. Allow trusted family members or friends to assist you with necessary decision-making.
14. If stress is causing you to react physically, use controlled breathing techniques to stabilize yourself. Take a slow deep breath by inhaling through your nose, hold your breath for 5 seconds and then exhale through your mouth. Upon exhalation, think the words "relax," "let go," or "I'm handling this." Repeat this process several times.
15. Realize that repetitive thinking and sleep difficulties are normal reactions. Don't fight the sleep difficulty. Try the following: Eliminate caffeine 4 hours prior to your bedtime, create the best sleep environment you can, consider taking a few moments before turning out the lights to write down your thoughts thus emptying your mind.
16. Give yourself permission to rest, relax, and engage in non-threatening activity. Read, listen to music, consider taking a warm bath, etc.
17. Physical exercise may help to dissipate the stress energy that has been generated by your experience. Take a walk, ride a bike, or swim.
18. Create a journal. Writing about your experience may help to expose yourself to painful thoughts and feelings and, ultimately, enable you to assimilate your experience.
19. If you find that your experience is too powerful, allow yourself the advantage of professional and/or spiritual guidance, support, and education.
20. Try to maintain your schedule. Traumatic events will disrupt the sense of normalcy. We are all creatures of habit. By maintaining our routines, we can maintain a sense of control at a time when circumstances may lead us to feel a loss of control.
21. Crises present opportunities. Cultivate a mission and purpose. Seize the energy from your experience and use it to propel you to set realistic goals, make decisions, and take action.

Source: American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress



## We Are Here to Help

EAP benefits are available to all employees and their families at NO COST to you. The EAP offers confidential advice, support, and practical solutions to help you through your grief and loss. You can access these confidential services by calling the toll-free number below and speaking with our care team or accessing online.

### Short-Term Therapy

For a deeper level of support, members can request short-term therapy by calling Uprise Health. Our nationwide provider network of more than 60,000 counselors can be filtered by criteria including geography, clinical specialty, cultural background, and other preferences, to ensure a perfect fit for you. After speaking with our care team, you will be provided with a list of providers. You can schedule an appointment yourself or ask the care team for assistance scheduling.

### 24-hour Crisis Support

During business hours, members who are in crisis are connected with an Uprise Health clinician who will stabilize your situation and refer you to appropriate support. After-hours calls are answered by behavioral health professionals located within the U.S. If you are in life threatening situation, please call 9-1-1 as you would do for any other medical/life emergency.

### Online Peer Support Groups

As part of your EAP program, you can request up to 10 online peer support groups where you will have a safe and confidential place to speak with others who have similar issues. Please call Uprise Health and speak with our care team to learn more about the Grief and Loss support group.



#### Contact Uprise Health

Call: 1-800-395-1616

Visit: [members.uprisehealth.com](https://members.uprisehealth.com)