



Trauma Intervention Programs of San Diego

EFFECTIVE WAYS OF COPING AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

1. Accept the fact you have been a victim and accept the feelings that result.
Remember: others may not validate your feeling. In fact, they may minimize your experience: "you were only a witness" or "you were really lucky" or "its been two weeks - why are you still bothered."
2. Accept all of the feelings you are having as normal reactions to an extraordinary event. You are not "crazy." you are reacting normally to a "crazy" event. Be patient with yourself. It takes time to recover emotionally from a traumatic event.
3. Combat any guilt you might have by:
 - Accepting it as normal.
 - Talking to others about your role and their role during the event. You are probable not alone in your reaction to this event.
 - Realizing you were a victim yourself and not a trained rescuer.
 - Recognizing what you "did right."
 - Recognizing the extenuating circumstances related to the event—the suddenness, the dangerousness, etc.
4. Don't revert to "bad habits" (alcohol, drugs, overeating) to cope. They will only make matters worse.
5. Maintain normalcy. Go about your daily routines and "take care of business".
6. Attempt to understand "what happened" by getting the facts.
7. Ventilate: talk about the event and write about it.
8. Thank those who helped you, and apologize to those you hurt during and since the tragic event.
9. Help each other
 - Reach out to support those who are particularly traumatized (see emotional first



aid skills)

- Respect each other's way of coping. Don't victimize each other by judging each other's individual coping style. Let the "grievers" grieve and allow the "doers" to do.

10. Decide as a group how you want to help:

- The victim
- The family
- Each other

11. If death has occurred: implement or participate in a "saying goodbye" ritual

- Attend services
- Contribute to a memorial fund
- Establish a memorial on scene
- Wear a symbol on clothing

12. Maintain a "continuing relationship" with the victim. It is quite normal and helpful to reminisce about the victim and to find ways of "keeping his memory alive."

13. Deal with bad memories by expanding your "memory tape" to include good memories.

- When bad memories of the event occur, immediately replace that memory with a memory of the entire day.
- Include good memories of the victim in your memory tape.

14. Allow your experience of this tragic event make you a better person.

- Identify what this tragedy has taught you.
- Incorporate what you have learned/realized into your "new life."