

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

SEEKING SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Making contact with others can help reduce feelings of distress
- College students can benefit from spending time with their peers
- Connections can be with family, friends, or others who are coping with the same traumatic event

Social Support Options

- Trusted family member
- Significant other or partner
- Close friend
- Faith-based community
- Doctor or nurse
- Support group
- Crisis counselor or other mental health professional
- Co-worker
- Pet

Do...

- Decide carefully whom to talk to
- Decide ahead of time what you want to discuss
- Choose the right time and place
- Start by talking about practical things
- Let others know you need to talk or just be with them
- Talk about painful thoughts and feelings when you're ready
- Ask others if it's a good time to talk
- Tell others you appreciate them listening
- Tell others what you need or how they could help – identify one specific thing you need from them

Don't...

- Keep quiet because you don't want to upset others
- Keep quiet because you're worried about being a burden
- Assume that others don't want to listen
- Wait until you're so stressed or exhausted that you can't fully benefit from help

Ways to Get Connected

- Callings friends and family on the phone
- Increasing contact with existing acquaintances and friends
- Campus ministries, church, or other faith-based organizations
- Getting involved with a support group
- Getting involved in community recovery activities

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GIVING SOCIAL SUPPORT

You can help family members and friends cope with the tragedy by spending time with them and listening carefully. Most people recover better when they feel connected to others who care about them. Some people may choose not to talk about their experiences very much, and others may need to discuss their experiences. For some, talking about things that happened because of the tragedy can help them seem less overwhelming. For others, just spending time with people one feels close to and accepted by, without having to talk, can feel best. Here is some information about giving social support to other people.

Reasons Why People May Avoid Social Support

- Not knowing what they need
- Feeling embarrassed or “weak”
- Feeling they will lose control
- Feeling that others will be disappointed or judgmental
- Doubting that it will be helpful, or that others won’t understand
- Having tried to get help and felt that it wasn’t beneficial or supportive
- Wanting to avoid thinking or feeling about the event
- Not wanting to burden others
- Not knowing where to get help

Good Things to Do When Giving Support

- Show interest, attention, and care
- Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk
- Be free of expectations or judgements
- Show respect for individuals’ reactions and ways of coping
- Acknowledge that this type of stress can take time to resolve
- Help brainstorm positive ways to deal with their reactions
- Talk about expectable reactions to a tragedy, and healthy coping
- Believe that the person is capable of recovery
- Offer to talk or spend time together as many times as needed

Things that Interfere with Giving Support

- Rushing to tell someone that he/she will be okay or that they should just “get over it”
- Discussing your own personal experiences without listening to the other person’s story
- Stopping the person from talking about what is bothering them
- Acting like someone is weak or exaggerating because he or she isn’t coping as well as you are
- Giving advice without listening to the person’s concerns or asking the person what works for him or her
- Telling them they were lucky it wasn’t worse

When Your Support Is Not Enough

- Let the person know that experts think that avoidance and withdrawal are likely to increase distress, and social support helps recovery
- Encourage the person to get involved in a support group with others who have similar experiences
- Encourage the person to talk with a mental health counselor or medical professional, and offer to accompany them
- Enlist help from others in your social circle so that you all take part in supporting the person

