

## **When News of Tragedy Makes Us Feel Unsafe**

Recent news of tragedy and random acts of violence, both close to home and across the country, can affect our mental and emotional health. Most people react to tragic news with shock, grief, and an outpouring of compassion and support for the families of the victims. But many people who are exposed to news of tragedy have more extreme reactions.

### **Some people actually experience symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):**

- PTSD: An anxiety disorder that can occur after experiencing a traumatic event that caused intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
- Can result from personally experienced traumatic event, or from the witnessing or learning of a violent or tragic event.
- People with PTSD continually re-experience the traumatic event; avoid individuals, thoughts, or situations associated with the event; and have symptoms of excessive emotions. Also may have trouble sleeping, anger outbursts, or jumpiness.
- Risk of developing PTSD is greater when person is exposed to multiple traumas or traumatic events early in life.

### **Coping with Tragedy:**

**For people who experience NORMAL reactions of shock, grief and feelings of hopelessness, it is recommended:**

- Limit intake of news of the event
- Carry on with normal activities as much as possible
- Reaffirm for yourself that MOST of the time, life is fairly routine and stable. These types of events are tragic, but not “usual”.

If there are clear symptoms of PTSD triggered by news of tragedy, treatment may be needed:

- Behavioral therapy focuses on relaxation techniques and coping strategies.
- Sometimes medication may be indicated to treat long-term effects of PTSD.

If you have concerns about whether your reactions are normal or extreme, talk with a health or mental health care provider.