



Terrorism & Global Events: Coping With the Stress Of Terrorism & Global Events

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Just following the devastating events of September 11, 2001, I received a request for the following article about coping with a profoundly disturbing and disruptive event. Naturally, I found myself thinking of my own family, friends and colleagues. I also thought of the thousands of people with whom, through my work in stress-management, I share strategies for coping with stress in our day-to-day lives. I thought of clients struggling with workplace stress, health-related and post-traumatic stress issues, of their children, their sleeplessness and worry, of their victories and losses, and those finding their ways through psychotherapy or chemotherapy. In a fast-paced 21st century world, day-to-day stress had become a routine part of daily life for many, but domestic terrorism was not...

Nothing about this is routine. There are no rules for coping with terror. There are no magic words of comfort, though I so wish there were. It is my heartfelt wish that this finds you and those you love accounted for and safe. Each of us, in our own ways, is immersed in the complexities of today's global events. As we sort through what is happening, what this will mean for us and for our families, for our nation and our planet, we have each now seen indelible images that will likely stay with us for the rest of our lives. But the resilience and strength of the human spirit are remarkable, and we must call upon that place in ourselves now...

Coping With Fear & Uncertainty: Intensive (Self) Care

Below are some simple, no-nonsense suggestions to help you through this stressful time as healthy and whole and available to those who need you as possible. Just do the best you can with these. Some will feel more comfortable for you than others. I hope that some thoughts here will bring you comfort. Please know they come with my warmest wishes and deepest prayers for the safety of you and all your loved ones and that of people we have never met.

1. Make your own health and wellness your daily gift to yourself, your friends and family. They need you now, perhaps more than ever. So much is out of your control, but attention to your body-mind-spirit is not. Your physical well-being will support emotional strength.
2. Get as much factual information as possible, and try to disregard rumors. Maintain normalcy in your routine where you can. Try not to "catastrophize" in your imagination when you do not know the facts. You will be told if there is a problem, and you will deal with any problems that may arise. Unless you know there is a problem, try to assume the best.

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3. Put your body chemistry to work for you. You can boost endorphins and serotonin, natural "feel-good" substances. Get some moderate, pleasurable exercise each day. Even a walk around the block can increase the feel-good factor.
4. Get plenty of rest. When under excessive stress, we may need more rest, and nightly sleep may not be as long, deep or restorative as needed. Listen to your body and rest as often as you need to right now. Take mini-breaks, but then get up and do something productive. You can rest again if you need to, but accomplishing small tasks will boost morale.
5. Eat enough, eat well, drink plenty of water. Make conscious food choices. You need to nourish your body, mind and soul. It's easy to either forget to eat or go for empty carbs when we're stressed. Try balancing food groups, perhaps eating small meals several times a day rather than three large meals. Monitor your use of sugar, alcohol and caffeine. All three can exacerbate stress in some cases. (Read the article about the potential impact of sugar on stress: www.relaxintuit.com)
6. Let your friends know that you need them now, that you will be needing them going forward, and that you are there for them as well. Our friends care and would like to help, but they may not know what you need. Call a friend today and make a date to visit, perhaps go out for a bite and to talk. If time is too short, schedule a phone date to talk things over. Take yourself to a movie, a museum, a walk in the park.
7. Read what brings you comfort, and do whatever is spiritually meaningful for you. Hug those who are dear to you. For the next 75 years (at least!), tell them each day how much you love them and why.
8. Schedule at least one pleasure for yourself daily - no exceptions. (*e.g. massage, exercise, music or a relaxation program, lunch with a friend, sports, time to journal, cry, dance, nap.*)
9. Talk with others about your feelings, and listen to theirs without judgment. Be alone if you need to be. Then, be with others.
10. If you are missing someone with whom you cannot talk, write to them even if they are gone. The act of writing can be an exquisitely healing comfort. (Suggestion: Try a writing meditation in which you write to that person, and then write a 'pretend' letter back to you from that person. Sounds strange I know, but this is a deeply powerful exercise, and many find tremendous relief in it.)

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11. Ask for help. You don't have to do this alone. Give your kids, parents and other relatives an opportunity to talk about what they're feeling as you do the same. If you sense that you or another is a risk or could benefit from talking with a skilled mental health professional, don't hesitate. Every community has such professionals. Your local hospital, physician or clergy member is a good starting place. Teachers, librarians and school psychologists can often be wonderful resources for age-appropriate books that help kids address different emotional issues.

12. Stay in-the-moment. Mindfulness is the first principle of meditation for healing relaxation. Try, as much as possible, to release the past and the future. Be Here Now. Above all, Hope. Hope is what gets us through the most challenging moments of our lives. Plan and Dream and Hope. I send my heartfelt compassion to all of you who are waiting and wondering and praying, as well as those who have faced excruciating, unspeakable loss. I wish you safety, courage, hope, and above all...Peace.

[NOTE: Find many other stress-relief tips as well as those to relieve post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at www.relaxintuit.com]

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