

Coping with Traumatic Stress

All human beings experience stress, especially in times of uncertainty. Stress is a physical and emotional reaction to change. It is important for you and your family to be able to recognize stress and know that there are ways to reduce and deal with the stress created by major events that are impacting you and your family.

Have I Experienced Traumatic Stress? You or someone you know may have experienced traumatic stress in the past or may be experiencing it now through major events which have caused you fear, uncertainty, or change.

Examples of incidences that could lead someone to experience traumatic stress may be:

- Fearing the serious injury of a family member(s), friends(s), and/or coworkers(s)
- Fearing the sudden death of a meaningful person/people in your life
- The unexpected death of a love one
- Fearing being the victim or a loved one being the victim

Physical reactions to traumatic stress

- Tingling or Numbness
- Fainting
- Nervous stomach
- Headaches
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Nausea or Vomiting

Behavioral reactions to traumatic stress

- Difficulty functioning at home or work
- Excessive edginess/jumpiness
- Appetite disturbances
- Isolation
- Sleep disturbance

Feelings or thoughts if you have experienced traumatic stress

- Fear/shock
- Sadness/depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability/anger/rage
- Confusion
- Decreased concentration
- Increased worrying



What you can do to help yourself. There are many practical things you can do to feel better. Here are some suggestions;

- **Maintain control over things that you can control and let go of things that you cannot.** Continue your daily routine. Give yourself permission to do the things that you enjoy and focus on those things.
- **Limit your television news viewing.** Tune in for occasional updates, but don't sit in front of the television waiting for them. Take breaks from the media to do something that you enjoy, like reading a book or listening to relaxing music.
- **Do something for someone else.** Taking attention off your own worries and doing something nice for someone else can improve your own frame of mind.
- **Stay connected with family and friends.** Don't isolate yourself. Spend time with others, especially people who make you feel comfortable, safe and secure.
- **Take care of yourself.** Maintain a balanced diet and sleep cycle. Exercise aerobically. Make sure you take time to rest and relax.
- **Seek professional help.** If you feel your problem is more serious and you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, hopelessness, or extreme anger, seek help from a mental health professional. You can call your **Penn Behavioral Health's toll-free number, 1-888-321-5533**. If you don't have the **PBH** program, check your employee benefits or with your local human services agency to see what services are available.
- **Be optimistic about the challenges ahead.** Try to maintain a positive outlook. Remember that there are others who support you and care about you and your family .