

When Terrible Things Happen: For Students

When a bad thing happens, people have many different kinds of thoughts and feelings. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Some of the ways we respond may be helpful, the way being around family and friends can help us feel happy or safe, while some of the ways we respond can make us feel very sad, scared, or angry.

A crisis can affect how you feel, how you think, and how you act.

You may feel confused, worried, shocked, sad, scared, angry, guilty, or numb. Maybe you're even scared about things that you weren't scared of before, such as being alone, being in the dark, or getting hurt.

You may have feelings in your bodies, such as:

- Being tired
- Headaches or stomachaches
- A fast heartbeat
- Feeling jumpy
- Having problems sleeping

You may have thoughts such as:

- Believing that what happened was your fault
- Images of the bad thing repeatedly popping into your head
- Nightmares
- Worrying that bad things will happen again

You may act differently:

- You may not want to be around family or friends
- You may get into more fights
- You may have a hard time concentrating or getting schoolwork done
- You may not want to talk about, think about, or have any feelings about the bad thing that happened
- You may not have as much fun as you used to
- You may not want to be around things that remind you of what happened

Many of these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors may occur when you're reminded of the bad thing that happened. Reminders may include places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings related to the event.

What helps when you are affected by a crisis:

- ✓ Talking to and spending time with family and friends
- ✓ Doing fun things with family and friends
- ✓ Eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising
- ✓ Getting back to a regular schedule—doing things that you would usually do
- ✓ Playing outside
- ✓ Listening to music
- ✓ Keeping a journal
- ✓ Giving yourself extra time to do homework
- ✓ Accepting that you may need extra help temporarily and being willing to ask others for support

What does NOT help when you are affected by a crisis:

- ✗ Avoiding thinking about what happened
- ✗ Fighting
- ✗ Staying away from family and friends
- ✗ Staying away from fun activities
- ✗ Taking risks, such as climbing too high, being careless crossing the street, or driving recklessly
- ✗ Using drugs or alcohol
- ✗ Avoiding asking for help when I need it

It is okay to feel sad or scared after a bad thing happens, but if these feelings get in the way of getting along with family or friends or doing your schoolwork, talk to an adult about your feelings.