

What You Need to Know...



Strategies for Dealing with Anniversaries of Traumatic Events

Anniversaries of tragedies can be difficult times for many people. For some, especially those family members and friends who were directly touched, the anniversary of Columbine High School, April 20, 1999, is a powerful reminder of loss. For others, who thought they had put the tragedy behind them, the anniversary may produce unexpected anxiety or grief.

The anniversary, and the media replay of all the day's destruction and aftermath that may come with it, will stir strong emotions in many of us. But there are positive ways to cope:

Coping Strategies

- Observe the anniversary in a way that's comfortable for you. Being with other people, getting involved in positive activities and talking about the tragedy are all important coping strategies, but taking time to be by yourself – to think and reflect – can be helpful and healing, as well.
- Get plenty of rest and exercise. Remember to eat well. Avoid excessive drinking.
- Avoid television as much as possible. The visual images can prompt especially strong reactions. Instead, watch a movie or read a book.
- If you start to feel overwhelmed, talk with a friend, family member, doctor, minister, or religious advisor. Often, talking about your fears and feelings is enough to relieve stress and realize that other people share your feelings. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.
- Recall other times you've experienced strong emotions. Consider which coping strategies and worked for you in the past, and use them.
- Don't compare yourself to how others around you are dealing with the September 11th anniversary. Everyone experiences and copes with stress differently. Remember not to judge other people's emotions.
- If you have children, encourage them to discuss their concerns and feelings with you. Maybe plan an after-school outing with them that will give everyone something positive to look forward to.
- If you have strong feelings that won't go away, or are affecting your relationships or job, seek help from a mental health professional.

For More Information:

For a free and confidential mental health screening, go on-line to www.mhacolorado.org.

www.mhacolorado.org

1385 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 610, Denver, Colorado 80222 P: 720.208.2220 / 800.456.3249 F: 720.208.2250