University Counseling Center
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Coping With Emotional Stress:
Some Practical, Common-Sense Suggestions That Work

It's normal……
- Remember, you are having normal human reactions, just like others under similar stress. You are not going "crazy" or having a nervous breakdown.
- Give yourself permission to feel bad. Like the flu, emotional stress has to run its course.
- Physically you may feel fatigued or have difficulty sleeping, notice changes in your appetite, or feel "on edge."
- It may be difficult to concentrate or make decisions. You may have unwanted thoughts or find yourself not able to think about anything other than the incident.
- Emotionally you may feel fear, guilt, anxiety, depression, anger, or helpless. You may also feel numb or spaced out.
- These reactions will decrease over time and in most ways they are adaptive and healing.

Stay in touch with others.
- Don't isolate yourself.
- Talk it out with people. Talk is a very healing medicine.
- Allow supportive people to assist you.
- Reach out to people who care – family, friends, clergy, counselors.

Stay active.
- Maintain a normal, active and productive schedule, but modify as necessary.
- Physical exercise (within your normal limits) is one of the best ways to reduce stress.
- Do things that you enjoy.

Help others. (It will help you too).
- Realize that those around you are also under stress.
- Assist family members, friends and colleagues who are experiencing stress.

Take care of yourself.
- Exercise regularly (within your limits) to burn away stress chemicals in your body.
- Avoid stressful situations for awhile.
- Have some relaxing times.
- Don't abuse alcohol or drugs. This can hinder and delay recovery.
- Eat well-balanced, regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).
- Get plenty of rest; remember that sleep disturbance is common, too.
- Avoid hazardous activities – there is an increased likelihood of accidents.
- Delay making major life decisions until your stress level lowers. Symptoms will decrease significantly.