

COPING WITH TRAUMATIC EVENTS



Support after a traumatic or distressing event.

Whether you witnessed events first-hand, know someone involved, or have been affected by media coverage, strong reactions are completely normal.

This guide is here to help you understand common responses, find practical coping strategies, and support others in your community.

START HERE

COMMON REACTIONS AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

People experience trauma in different ways. You may notice:

What you might notice

Emotional

- Shock, disbelief or numbness
- Fear, anxiety, a sense of danger
- Sadness, anger or frustration
- Guilt or helplessness

Physical

- Fatigue or disrupted sleep
- Tight chest or rapid heart rate
- Headaches, loss of appetite
- Restlessness or difficulty concentrating

Behavioural

- Avoiding reminders of the incident
- Seeking constant news updates
- Wanting to keep busy, or withdrawing
- Heightened protectiveness toward family

These responses are normal, and for many people they ease over time.

REACH OUT

WHEN TO SEEK FURTHER HELP

If your feelings are overwhelming, persistent, or impacting daily life, please reach out for professional support.

Crisis and support services

Lifeline — **13 11 14**

Kids Helpline (ages 5–25) — **1800 55 1800**

Beyond Blue — **1300 22 4636**

MensLine Australia — **1300 78 99 78**

You don't have to navigate this alone.

TAKE ACTION

PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR WELLBEING

These strategies can help you regain a sense of safety and grounding.

1

Limit media exposure

Continuous news and social media updates can heighten distress.

- Set specific times to check updates
- Choose reputable sources
- Avoid graphic content

2

Use grounding techniques

Grounding helps your body and mind re-establish a sense of calm.

- The 5–4–3–2–1 technique (see the handout below)
- Slow breathing exercises
- Holding something cool or textured
- Feeling your feet on the ground

3

Maintain your daily routine

Predictability helps restore a sense of control and normalcy.

4

Connect with others

Talk with someone you trust — a friend, family member, neighbour, or community member.

5

Take care of your body

Eat regularly, stay hydrated, walk outdoors, stretch, and rest when you can.

6

Do things that bring comfort

This might include listening to music, spending time with pets, reading, crafting, or watching a favourite show. Find out more about how music can help your wellbeing at tuneinnotout.com, and more self care tips in our Self Care for Beginners factsheet.

MAKE IT YOURS

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people may express trauma differently — through behaviour changes, questions, clinginess, withdrawal, irritability, or sleep issues.

Helpful tips for adults

Keep it simple

Give simple, age-appropriate information.

Reassure

Let them know they are safe.

Listen

Listen calmly and validate their feelings.

Keep routines steady

Predictability helps them feel secure.

Limit news exposure

Avoid exposing them to distressing footage.

Encourage expression

Drawing, writing or talking can help them process.

Our youth health and wellbeing portal, Tune In Not Out, has a section dedicated to coping with traumatic incidents — videos, factsheets and even music playlists for young people.

Additional parent resources:

- Kids Helpline — **Resources for Parents**

MAKE IT YOURS

SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITY AS A LION

Lions often play a significant role in helping communities navigate difficult times. Ways you can support include:

- Checking in on vulnerable or isolated individuals
- Hosting a low-key cuppa & chat event to give people a space to connect
- Sharing ALWF and Tune In Not Out resources with club members and families
- Encouraging others to seek professional support when needed
- Being a calm, informed presence in your community

You don't have to navigate this alone either

Visit alwf.org.au/support for further options, or call Lifeline: 13 11 14.



alwf.org.au

A resource from the Australian Lions Wellbeing Foundation. Video provided by ReachOut Australia.