

Connecting with Others: For Adults

SEEKING SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Making contact with others can help reduce feelings of distress
- Adults can benefit from spending time with other similar-age peers
- Adults need the support of familiar adults to cope with traumatic events
- Support can come from family, friends, teachers, or others coping with the same traumatic event

Social Support Options

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouse or partner • Trusted family member • Close friend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clergy • Doctor or nurse • Counselor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support group • Co-worker/Teacher • Pet |
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Do . . .

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decide carefully whom to talk to ✓ Decide ahead of time what you want to discuss ✓ Choose the right time and place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Start by talking about practical things ✓ Let others know you need to talk or just to be with them ✓ Talk about painful thoughts and feelings when you're ready | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask others if it's a good time to talk ✓ Tell others you appreciate their listening ✓ Tell others what you need or how they can help—name one main thing that would help you right now |
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Don't . . .

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Keep quiet because you don't want to upset others ✗ Keep quiet because you're worried about being a burden | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Start by talking about practical things ✗ Let others know you need to talk or just to be with them |
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Ways to Get Connected

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call friends or family on the phone • Increase contact with the acquaintances and friends you have now • Renew or begin involvement with a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get involved with a support group • Get involved in community recovery activities |
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GIVING SOCIAL SUPPORT

You can help family members and friends cope with the emergency by spending time with them and listening carefully. You may also feel better yourself when you give support to others. Most people recover best when they feel connected to people who care about them. Some people choose not to talk about their experiences very much, while others do need to discuss their experiences. For some, talking about what happened can help those events seem less overwhelming. For others, just spending quiet time with people who are close and accepting can feel best. Here is some information about giving social support to other people.

Reasons Why People May Avoid Social Support

- Not knowing what they need
- Feeling embarrassed or “weak”
- Feeling they will lose control
- Not wanting to burden others
- Doubting it will be helpful or thinking that others won’t understand
- Having tried unsuccessfully to get help in the past
- Wanting to avoid thinking or feeling about the event
- Feeling that others will be disappointed or judgmental
- Not knowing where to get help

Good Things to Do When Giving Support

- Show interest, attention, and that you care
- Find a time and place to talk without interruption
- Have no expectations; don’t judge
- Show respect for the person’s reactions and ways of coping
- Acknowledge that this type of stress can take time to resolve
- Help brainstorm positive ways to deal with his/her reactions
- Talk about expected reactions to traumatic events and healthy coping
- Express belief that the person is capable of recovery
- Offer to talk or spend time together as many times as is needed

Things That Interfere with Giving Support

- Rushing to tell someone that he/she will be okay or that he/she should just “get over it”
- Discussing your personal experiences without listening to the other person’s story
- Stopping the person from talking about what is bothering him/her
- Acting like someone is weak or exaggerating, because he/she isn’t coping as well as you are
- Giving advice without listening to the person’s concerns or asking what works for him/her
- Telling the person he/she was lucky it wasn’t worse

Ways to Get Connected

- Let the person know that experts think persistent avoidance and withdrawal are likely to increase distress, while social support helps recovery
- Encourage the person to join a support group with others who have had similar experiences
- Encourage the person to talk with a counselor, clergy, or medical professional, and offer to accompany him/her
- Enlist help from others in your social circle, so that you all take part in supporting the person