

## Helping others after a major event

Around the globe major events are occurring more frequently and present a wide range of challenges for us whether we are directly involved or not. Major events can significantly impact on our day to day life and helping your loved ones, your colleagues or members of your community following a major event can play an important role in their recovery.

Following a major event many people will need support, assistance and care. It can however be difficult to know the best way to support someone who is going through such a challenging time. People respond to respectful and authentic gestures so don't be afraid to show your emotion and be yourself.

While it takes time, most people will recover from major events with support from their family, friends and colleagues.

### How can I provide support?

One of the most important ways to provide support is to offer your assistance, even if they have not asked for any help. People can find it difficult to ask for help and your offer may ease that process. If they don't want assistance, they will let you know, and you should not force it on them.

The following are additional tips for providing support to those who have been impacted in some way:

- ◆ Be ready to listen if they are comfortable talking, and let them lead the conversation rather than you
- ◆ Let people cry – it can be a good way to let out emotion and heal
- ◆ Don't feel forced to say anything. Sometimes simply being present and spending time with someone is all the help they need
- ◆ Help with everyday jobs including cooking meals, cleaning, minding children and picking up the groceries. Some people will need to retain a sense of control by doing these tasks themselves, so don't be offended if they say they don't need your help
- ◆ Make sure they won't be alone for the first few nights following a major event. Offer them accommodation, or offer to stay with them if they feel comfortable
- ◆ If they are concerned about safety, reassure them that they are safe
- ◆ Remember that everyone processes traumatic events differently – try not to take any anger or other emotions directed at you personally

- ◆ Give them some space and time to be alone, but don't let them isolate themselves for too long or too often
- ◆ Let them know you are there for them through touch – this can be comforting. Don't forget to ask if it's okay first as some people may prefer space – ask if they would like a hug or gesture to hold their hand
- ◆ Avoid saying things like “it could have been worse”, “you're lucky compared to some people” or “I know how you feel”. You may be trying to console them, but it could make them feel worse about the feelings they are trying to process. Instead, tell them you're sorry for what they have experienced and are going through, that you want to understand how they are feeling and what they are thinking, and that you want to help them

Remember that everyone processes major events differently so try not to make assumptions about how someone should be feeling or behaving.

If you are concerned about someone, or feel they are significantly distressed, encourage them to seek professional help. This might be talking to a trusted friend or family member, consulting a GP or accessing services such as Employee Assistance.

While you are looking after others, don't forget to look after yourself. Caring for others can be draining physically and emotionally so keep an eye on your own health.

Although this is a challenging time, your support can help to remind someone that they are not alone and help them navigate through their recovery.