

The next steps after tragedy

Support Toolkit



Our Mission

Give an Hour's mission is to develop resilient individuals and communities and grow our social impact through responsive, scalable, individualized mental health programs aimed at closing access and delivery gaps to mental health care.

Thank you for your interest in this toolkit. Maybe the unthinkable has happened and you or someone you love has been directly affected by a mass violence event. Maybe you are trying to get your agency ready for such an occurrence and you're not sure where to start. Maybe a client or participant who has been directly affected by mass violence is attempting to receive services from you or your agency. Whatever the reason, we welcome you to this comprehensive look at mass violence response and acknowledge your concern for yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

Mass Violence

Mass violence is an issue growing in importance to the public domain. No longer can we say that we don't go to certain places or gather with certain people or act certain ways to incite this type of violence. Mass violence occurs in public and in private, in schools and in grocery stores, in private homes and in houses of worship. The resources gathered here are meant to educate you and to help you understand how to respond if the unthinkable has happened. We want to provide relevant resources and information to help shine a light into dark places and to encourage resilience in you and in your workplace.

Resources to Support Trauma Recovery

Some of these resources are good for many types of trauma and others are specific to mass violence. Please read through and take what is useful to you and leave the rest. We encourage your feedback and hope you will reach out if you would like additional information or direction on how to affect change in your agency due to mass violence exposure. Give an Hour has worked in several mass violence communities and have best practices and collaborative activities to share. Thank you again for your interest.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN FACED WITH DISASTER

When we go through unspeakable pain, it's easy to dip into despair. Even if it doesn't feel like it at the time, you will get through the hurt.

ALL FEELINGS ARE OK

Pain, grief, sadness, and anger look different for everyone.

KEEP THE SAME ROUTINE

Wake up, shower, eat, exercise; keep up with the basics of self care.

LIMIT INPUT & EXPOSURE

Protect yourself from outside opinions and reliving the event.

PRIORITIZE BASIC NEEDS

Keep focused on needs and self care. Remember to hydrate and nourish your body. Put the "to do" list aside for now.

ASK FOR HELP

Reach out to see if others can help with meals, cleaning, driving, dog walking, support, listening, or simply sitting with you. You can return the kindness one day, others want to help.

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Seek professional mental healthcare to work through & process the events



REMINDE YOURSELF:

- You are not alone
- There is hope on the other side of pain
- You are allowed to feel all the feelings
- You are resilient

Sympathy & Empathy

The difference between sympathy and empathy? When you're sympathetic, you might feel pity for the other person's situation and there's still a distance between you and their experience. When you're empathetic, you don't just know how someone else feels...you understand how they feel, and you feel it with them. Or, simply put, empathy "implies feeling with a person, rather than feeling sorry for a person." When we express empathy, it facilitates genuine human connections like nothing else can. When another person perceives you as empathetic, they feel understood, respected, and valued.

Empathetic Statements

- It sounds like you did everything you could
- I can see how difficult this has been
- The whole thing sounds so discouraging
- I can totally see why you would be upset
- This is so hard
- I can't believe how well you're holding up considering how much stress you're under



Active Listening (ie: Sitting in the Shit)

An empathetic person listens first and only speaks after they've carefully heard. We call this active listening.



Active listening means affirming what the person is saying with nods and verbal cues like "uh-huh," and asking clarifying questions to show attentiveness. It also involves resisting the urge to immediately offer solutions. Simply sitting with someone in their darkness, understanding their situation, and not being afraid to be there with them can be incredibly helpful.



Let the speaker actually speak. Sitting in silence is hard, but giving someone time to finish their thought or avoid interruption is key. Avoiding the urge to immediately jump in and try to help.



Commit your undivided attention to the conversation by maintaining steady eye contact or leaning in towards the person. Resist side conversations, interruptions or unfocused body language.



Summarize your understanding. Once the speaker has finished talking, reflect their experience back to them by saying things like, "So, what I'm hearing from you is that the hardest part of what you are experiencing is..." Then ask, "Have I understood this correctly?"



Allow the other person to rant. When someone's having troubles they may be emotionally flustered. That's okay. Give them the space to feel that. Let them talk from their heart and share how they feel; often, this will lead to them discovering their own solutions.

Active Listening

An empathetic person listens first and only speaks after they've carefully heard. We call this active listening. Here are ways to demonstrate active listening:

- Affirm with visible nodding and verbal responses
- Ask clarifying questions
- Avoid immediate urge to help
- Sit with someone in their darkness
- Understand and share their space
- Commit undivided attention
- Avoid side conversations and interruptions
- Maintain eye contact or lean in
- Allow speaker to finish thoughts
- Resist interrupting or jumping in
- Summarize understanding
- Reflect speaker's experience
- Confirm comprehension
- Allow ranting
- Let them share feelings
- Enable self-discovery of solutions

Exercise



Engage in an empathy role-play exercise: rehearse empathetic responses and verbal affirmations to acquaint yourself with compassionate communication.

Empathetic Statements

- It sounds like you did everything you could
- I can see how difficult this has been
- The whole thing sounds so discouraging
- I can totally see why you would be upset
- This is so hard
- I can't believe how well you're holding up considering how much stress you're under
- Your feelings are completely valid in this situation
- I understand why this experience has been so challenging for you

Affirmations

- Maintain relaxed facial expression and tone
- Use statements of appreciation, understanding, and positive feedback
- I am so glad you came into today – it isn't always easy to seek support
- You are taking care of yourself when you set boundaries
- You really care about your work and it shows
- It shows great commitment to be present and show up
- You have great ideas, I'd love to hear more

Remember: Affirmations are not about your approval of your colleague

Often our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help. If you recognize that you or someone else needs help, reach out, show compassion and a willingness to find a solution when the person may not have the will or drive to do it alone.

Here are five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help:



PERSONALITY CHANGES

You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.



UNCHARACTERISTICALLY ANGRY, ANXIOUS, AGITATED, OR MOODY

You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.



WITHDRAWAL OR ISOLATION FROM OTHER PEOPLE

Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.



MAY NEGLECT SELF-CARE AND ENGAGE IN RISKY BEHAVIOR

You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.



OVERCOME WITH HOPELESSNESS AND OVERWHELMED BY CIRCUMSTANCES

Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

F A C E *the* F I V E

Signs Everyone Needs to Know



Personality
Change



Uncharacteristically
angry, anxious,
agitated, or moody



Withdrawal or
isolation from
other people



May neglect self-
care & engage in
risky behavior



Overcome with
hopelessness &
overwhelmed by
circumstances

THESE ARE FIVE SIGNS THAT MAY MEAN SOMEONE
IS IN EMOTIONAL PAIN & MIGHT NEED HELP.

Emotions Tracker

Keeping It *Real*

An estimated 12 billion working days are missed every year due to depression and anxiety at a cost of \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity. To help track how you're feeling as you balance work and life, make a check mark if you felt any of the below. Most of these are normal emotions. **However if you've had these feelings more than two weeks, stop and take action to get the help you need.**

I am feeling...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
"Off"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moody	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry and agitated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That I want to be alone all the time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Like I want a drink alcohol in order to cope/relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Like I don't care if I'm clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overwhelmed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hopeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*this is not a diagnostic tool. The goal is to become aware of your emotions so that you can track your emotional baseline and recognize when you need to reach out for help.

The *Healthy* Habits of Emotional Wellbeing

It is important to recognize when someone is in emotional pain. It is equally important to learn basic habits that keep up emotionally healthy.

What are the Healthy Habits of Emotional Wellbeing? They are habits that everyone can learn, habits that allow each of us to identify and practice that works for us.



TAKE CARE OF YOU

Eat, sleep, and be active. We don't often think about how important these basic activities are for our mental health -- but they are critical.



CHECK IN AND GET CHECKUPS

We get check-ups for our physical health. We see our dentist to take care of our teeth. It's time to take responsibility and get check-ups for our emotional wellbeing. Talk with your doctor, a counselor, a faith-based leader....and your family and friends to make sure you, and those you love, are doing well emotionally.



ENGAGE AND CONNECT WISELY

Pay attention to your relationships. We can't be healthy if our relationships are not.



RELAX

Learn ways to reduce the stress that we all face -- and practice what works for you: meditate, run, knit, dance, sing, write, love...



KNOW THE FIVE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL SUFFERING

The Five Signs are change in personality, agitation, withdrawal, decline in personal care, and hopelessness. Someone may exhibit one or more signs. Many conditions can result in emotional pain. If you see them in someone you love, reach out, connect and offer to help.

Healthy Habits of Emotional Wellbeing

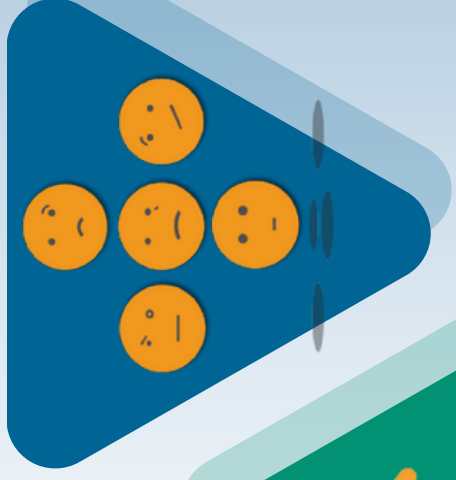
TAKE CARE
OF YOU



ENGAGE &
CONNECT WISELY



KNOW THE FIVE
SIGNS OF SUFFERING



CHECK IN & GET
CHECK UPS



RELAX



Change is a constant in life that everyone experiences. It is an interruption of a comfortable pattern that has been mentally extended to the future. When the unexpected happens, this can cause feelings of vulnerability and loss of control. Whether it be from an expected or unexpected life event, it is common to feel disoriented and violated when a change has occurred. Change can be activating and may feel risky or unsafe even if it's not. Incorporating ways to navigate forward is crucial.

Ground and Anchor

Focus on the familiar, like a regular routine, your favorite TV show, or comfort. Stay in the present and that will help the past stay in the past.

Surround Yourself with Trust

Is social media aggravating your feelings? Take a break. Hang out with people who understand. Talk to your support person or a mental health professional.

Name it

Acknowledge your feelings. Write them down. Say them outloud. Share them. Denying the change is like fighting the current. Flow with it, look for encouragements in the new direction you are taking.

Stick to Healthy Meal, Exercise, and Sleep Routines

Rebooting and refueling our bodies helps us have the strength and energy to address the rest. Reinforcing the physical-you reinforces the mental-you.

Gain Perspective

Evaluate how much control you have over the situation. Take back the control by focusing your feelings and your reactions. Focus on your values and tell the fear to take a hike. Fight the worry, hate, or despair and remind yourself that you are in charge of your reaction.

Training your brain that change is ok and YOU are ok will help you cope.



TRAUMAVERSARY

HOW TO MANAGE ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS AFTER TRAUMA



Without even looking at a calendar, our bodies and minds remember the season, month or day of trauma from the past. For traumatic event, months and even years later. Not everyone experiences anniversary reactions in the same way or at all. It's important in the healing process to acknowledge, name and address reactions as they surface during these times. Healing is a distinctive experience and, as time progresses, with support from family, friends, fellow survivors and mental health professionals, as well as healthy coping practices, these "traumaversaries" will be more manageable.

COMMON REACTIONS

- Frustration, restlessness, sadness
- Guilt and grief
- Fear, anxiety, depression
- Memories, flashbacks, hypervigilance
- Physical symptoms like nausea, over or under sleeping, etc.



ACTIVATORS

- News, social media
- Sounds, smells, sights
- Events, celebrations, seasons, holidays near anniversary date
- Reminders specific to your trauma



WAYS TO GET THROUGH IT

1. Give yourself grace and time
2. Let go of the compare game, there's no 'should be' in healing
3. Commemorate with a new positive association
4. Seek support from your peers and loved ones
5. Practice grounding techniques
6. Keep your normal routines
7. Plan ahead to minimize stress during this time period
8. Engage in healthy activities and things that provide comfort
9. Purposefully use positive self talk, & hopeful internal dialogue
10. Step out of your box and help others, it'll fill your cup

REPEAT AFTER ME!

- I am exactly where I need to be in my journey
- I am safe. This feeling is temporary
- I am in control of my feelings
- I am not alone
- My courage is stronger than my fear

Connect to *Hope*

ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH CARE



Seeking therapy is always a good thing. Therapists listen to your story and help you make connections. They may offer guidance or recommendations when you feel lost. A good therapist will not tell you what to do, but empower you to take action on your own. People often know exactly what to do when they have a physical illness, but do you know when, who, and how to find care for a mental concern? There is no single, correct approach in finding care. Connecting with the right provider may take some time. With patience & perseverance, these tips will help you find your provider.

WHEN TO SEEK CARE

- Anytime! Maintenance is essential to your mental health
- You feel like you can't do normal daily activities you previously were able to accomplish
- Thinking about or coping with an issue is taking more than one hour of your day
- You have a major life event (birth, death, job change, breakups, family struggles)
- You need help coping with symptoms of an illness that may not respond to treatment right away
- You've developed habits to cope with your emotional health that are impacting you physically in a negative way

WHO TO CHOOSE

- If you have a mental health condition that may benefit from medication, consult a mental health doctor, such as a psychiatrist or mental health nurse practitioner who has experience treating your condition (MD, DO, PMHNP, APN)
- If you're seeking help with emotions, behaviors, and patterns, consult with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist. Like medical doctors, these professionals have specialties, so find one who knows about your specific issue (credentials include LCSW, LPC, LMFT, PhD)

HOW TO FIND CARE

Common places to find mental health providers:

- Ask your insurance company for a list of in-network providers or your company's employee assistance program (EAP)
- Ask trusted family or friends for recommendations
- Search nonprofit, government or mental health organization websites that have lists of providers
- Contact local or national mental health organizations
- General internet search for "psychiatrist" or "therapist" in your city

Consider consulting your physician. Some physical health issues may cause symptoms similar to mental health illnesses. A physician can navigate this concern.

WHAT TO ASK PROVIDERS

Before the first session:

- Do you have experience helping individuals with concerns like mine?
- Do you accept my insurance? If I don't have insurance, do you have a sliding scale for payments?
- What kinds of therapy do you offer?
- Do you have a regular opening that fits my schedule?

After the first session:

- Do you think we are a good fit?
- What will my treatment plan or our sessions look like?
- How often do you think I should come?
- Will we make goals together? How will we measure success?
- How do I reach you in an emergency?

****If you, or someone you love, is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room right away****

REMEMBER: YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR THERAPY RELATIONSHIP. ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF AND SEEK ANOTHER CARE PROVIDER IF YOU DO NOT FEEL LIKE IT IS A GOOD THERAPUTIC FIT. ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL!

How to Cope...

When There's No Immediate Fix

Feeling helpless when you're a helper is disheartening, frustrating, and draining. This is especially true when an issue cannot be easily solved or the outcome is not within your control. You may be part of the solution in an imperfection situation. Learning ways to mitigate these mixed feelings is essential for your mental and physical health.

Establish Healthy Coping Mechanisms

Develop a "letting go" routine. It's easy to get preoccupied with the "failure". It can feel demoralizing to think there's nothing you can do. When we look at the big picture, things that go right often outnumber the things that go wrong.



Consider journaling each small win, even if the result isn't what you want, you can feel good about what you did accomplish.

Establish Healthy Coping Mechanisms

Create a dedicated workspace:

- When you walk away from it, the work is over
- Close or silence apps when your shift is over
- Calendar fun activities as if they are work meetings.

Ignoring the Pain Won't Make it go Away

Ignoring your pain or keeping it from surfacing won't make it go away, it will only make it worse. Manage grief and pain by acknowledging it and making strategies to actively deal with it. Consider that your go to strategy needs to change and the reason why the problem isn't fixed, isn't because of you!

You Don't Need to Stay Strong for Others

Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family, friends, or colleagues by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you to manage and process your feelings. Their perspective may offer you an objective response to help ground you in the here and now.



Managing Expectations

The human mind is incredibly averse to uncertainty and ambiguity. We respond to uncertainty or lack of clarity by generating plausible explanations. These expectations need to be managed as they're not based in reality.

It's Okay to not be Okay right now.



Relinquish your search for reasons, and what-ifs. Trying to force answers can lead to more frustration and confusion than when you started. We don't own events or their reasons. We own what we do with them.



Let go of the expectations of others and of the pressures that you put on yourself- these are not an accurate representation of you.



Expectations can be contradictory. It is statistically impossible to please everyone. Don't allow the voices of others drown out your own.

Coping with Emotional Distress from Fireworks & Loud Sounds: Tips for Trauma Survivors and Those Sensitive to Loud Noises

In the United States, holidays like New Year's and the 4th of July are celebrated with fireworks and festivities. However, these events can be distressing for many people, particularly those who have experienced trauma involving loud noises, gunfire, or explosions. Loud sounds and anticipation of these celebrations can significantly affect those with a history of trauma.

Understanding Trauma Responses

Trauma Activation: Fireworks and even something as "normal" as a loud car, can often activate symptoms of post-traumatic stress, leading to anxiety, panic attacks, and flashbacks due to their association with loud, explosive sounds.

Sensory Overload: The combination of loud noises and bright lights can cause sensory overload, resulting in significant emotional distress.

Sleep Disturbance: Fireworks, especially those set off late at night, disrupt sleep patterns, exacerbating PTS-related sleep issues.

Emotional Responses: Loud sounds can evoke feelings of fear, anxiety, and sadness that may be felt with such intensity that causes a fight, flight, or paralyzing response.

Social Isolation: To avoid distress, some individuals may isolate themselves during celebrations, which can further impact their mental health.

How to Support Others

Promote Awareness: Share information about how fireworks can affect individuals with trauma histories. Consider advocating for silent fireworks.

Participate in Community Events: Support and attend community events that are designed to be inclusive and considerate of those who may be distressed by fireworks.

Offer Alternatives: If you're hosting a gathering, provide alternative activities that don't involve loud noises, such as a movie night, a barbecue, or a game night.

Strategies for Managing Emotional Distress



Create a Safe Space at Home: Designate a quiet, comfortable area in your home equipped with blankets, books, & comfort items where you can retreat if the celebrations become overwhelming.



Noise Reduction: Use noise-canceling headphones or earplugs to reduce the impact of loud noises.



Inform Neighbors: If you feel comfortable, inform your neighbors about your sensitivity to fireworks. They may be willing to adjust their celebrations or give you a heads-up before starting.



Engage in Distraction Techniques: Engage in activities that require focus and can serve as distractions, such as puzzles, games, or crafts.



Self-Care: Before known holidays, promote self-care activities that enhance relaxation and well-being, such as exercise, hobbies, or spending time with loved ones. Allow time for decompression after known loud sounds as well.



Support Systems: Lean on friends, family, or support groups such as those provided by [Give an Hour](#) for emotional support.



Physical Techniques: Taking slow, deep breaths communicates to the brain to ease the survival response, signaling that everything is fine and it's safe to relax.



Mental Reminders: Repeat to yourself "I am not in danger", "I am safe", "These are fireworks", "That's just a loud car"

BUILDING CONNECTION TO SAFELY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

As a parent or caregiver of a child struggling with emotional pain, it can feel overwhelming. Knowing how to respond and support your child might be confusing, leading to feelings of fear and guilt. Know that you're not alone, and you're not to blame.



Talking about suicide saves lives

When your child is in distress, it can be daunting to find the "right" moment to ask the difficult questions, and listen to the hard to hear real answers. This is especially true when it comes to talking about suicide. Just as we teach our kids lock down drills or fire drills. It's important to teach them that it is okay to talk their mental health, including self-harm, and ask for help.

Research shows that talking openly about suicide doesn't increase the risk; in fact, it can decrease it.

Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens communication, and reduces the risk of an impulsive act.

Seize opportune moments to reinforce trust and empathy

Be attentive to moments when your teenager may be more open to bonding, like when they're home from school due to illness or experiencing challenges with friends or a breakup. Use these opportunities to provide care and understanding, whether it's through a small gesture like bringing them a treat, sharing an activity, or just being there to lend an ear.

Find places for communication in your daily routine.

Write to your teen.

If talking is a bit tough for you and/or your child, try using texts or e-mails to communicate occasionally.

Engage in shared activities

Find common interests or hobbies that you can enjoy together. Whether it's going to a craft store with an artsy teen, visiting a used bookstore with a book lover, or collaborating on a DIY project like painting a wall in their room, shared activities provide an opportunity for quality time and opportunities to connect meaningfully.

By expressing genuine interest in their interests and initiatives, you strengthen your bond, which helps to make difficult conversations a little bit easier when the time comes.



If you sense that your child is in immediate danger, it's crucial to approach the conversation directly and promptly.

If in doubt, don't wait, call 911.

Connecting with music



Use music as a tool to connect with teens and understand their emotions:

- **Ask about favorite songs:** Inquire about the music they enjoy and if any songs resonate with them emotionally.
- **Listen and discuss:** Take time to listen to their favorite songs together, then discuss the lyrics, melody, and how the music makes them feel.
- **Create Spotify playlists:** Help them create playlists reflecting different emotions or life events, providing a creative outlet for expression.
- **Use music to access emotions:** Recognize music as a powerful tool for processing emotions that teens might find difficult to verbalize.

Practical Prompts

To Talk to Youth About Suicide

63% of teens report being comfortable talking to parents/guardians about mental health needs, but fewer than half report actually doing it ([NAMI 2022](#)).

These prompts help close the gap.

More than 20% of teens have seriously considered suicide. [APA 2023](#)



Understand the Intensity of Their Emotions

"When you're feeling the most sad or awful about your life, how bad does it feel? Pretty awful? OK, pretty awful or very awful?"

"When you're feeling very awful, how alone do you feel with it? Pretty alone? Or all alone?"



Recall Specific Moments

"Take me to the last time you felt like that. **Was it 3:00 am on Thursday, we kinda heard you playing music and walking back and forth in your room? We've noticed you just haven't been yourself lately...**When was the last time you felt that?"

Note: Talking about something you've noticed can help take them back to that moment and shows them that they're seen.



Remain Calm and Curious

Mention any warning signs you may have seen. Listen attentively and without judgment. Use open-ended questions to encourage deeper conversation, avoiding quick solutions that may shut down communication. Validate and support their emotions by following their lead by saying, "**I promise not to judge, and my support for you will never waver, regardless of the challenges.**"



Provide Safety

"When you're feeling that way, or close to that way, I want you to do whatever it takes to get my undivided attention."

"We might have a million things on our minds, and we can get distracted unintentionally, but **there's nothing more important to either of us than helping you feel less alone**, especially when you feel that awful. Will you do that, please?"

HELPFUL TIPS

- Positively reinforce when they share, whether or not it's positive or not.
- Engage with your teenager when they appear relaxed and receptive.
- Don't take what they say personally
- Take a timeout if needed and revisit the conversation later

**give[®]
anhour**
Mental Health. For Life.

 www.giveanhour.org

*credit to psychiatrist Dr. Mark Goulston

ESTABLISHING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AS PARENTS

It's important to have healthy boundaries in any relationship whether it's friends, coworkers, or with family members. Setting boundaries is important for your mental and personal health. It also models a needed behavior for your teen.

Secure Your Oxygen Mask

Identify behaviors and actions that make you uncomfortable. If these behaviors cause you anxiety, it's time to put healthy boundaries in place.

- It's not selfish, it's self-care
- Value your time and ask others to do the same
- Set realistic expectations
- Make it official and write a list of boundaries
- Practice saying "no" or simply walk away when a boundary is crossed
- Be open to talking about them
- Identify, eliminate, and avoid triggers

How to Set a Boundary

- Identify your needs.
- Be clear and direct.
- State consequences.
- Use assertive language.
- Stick to your boundaries.



Dropping Anchor

Staying Strong Amidst a Storm

When your teen is going through emotional turmoil, it's natural to feel their distress deeply, especially for empathetic parents and caregivers. However, in these moments, it's crucial for you to be the stable anchor amidst the storm. By finding your center, you can effectively provide the support and reassurance your teen needs.

Take a Moment: Before you address your teens feelings, assess your own emotional state. Acknowledge any personal anxieties or worries, and consider how they might affect your ability to support your teen effectively.

Stay Calm: It can be hard to maintain your composure when under stress but remember that your demeanor sets the tone for your teens emotional regulation, so practicing deep breathing or mindfulness techniques can help you both stay centered.

Share the Load: Utilize appropriate outlets (like peer support) to talk about your frustrations and find support. Just like your teen, you're not in this alone! Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or a therapist to discuss your own feelings and seek guidance.

RESOURCES:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text "HELLO" to 741741

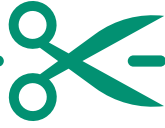
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386

Teen Line: 1-310-855-4673 or text "TEEN" to 839863

"I want you to know that I love you and am here for you, but I need to set a boundary for both of our sakes. **If you are actively considering harming yourself, I will need to take action to ensure your safety.**"

Print this out and put it in your wallet.



MY MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE CARD

My support person is:

Their phone
number/email is:

When I'm having a
hard time I will:

 **giveanhour** *I will not wait to reach out for help*
Mental Health. For Life.



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Help Lines for Immediate *Support*



- SAMHSA: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- Crisis Text Line: Text SIGNS to 741741
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255);
Veterans press 1
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
<https://988lifeline.org/> Dial 988 TTY:
1-800-799-4889

How to Help

Many people around the nation want to help when acts of mass violence happen in our community.

- » [Donate to reputable causes](#)
- » [Be a change maker, become a Wellness Ambassador](#)
- » [Let Mental Health Professionals know about our volunteer opportunities to serve the community](#)
- » [Sign up for mental health training](#)
- » [Learn and share these valuable educational resources](#)
- » [Contact Give an Hour about our Mass Violence Programs](#)



"Healing is a collective endeavor, forged through the **bonds of community**, as we lift one another through **support, shared experience, empathy, and compassion.**"

