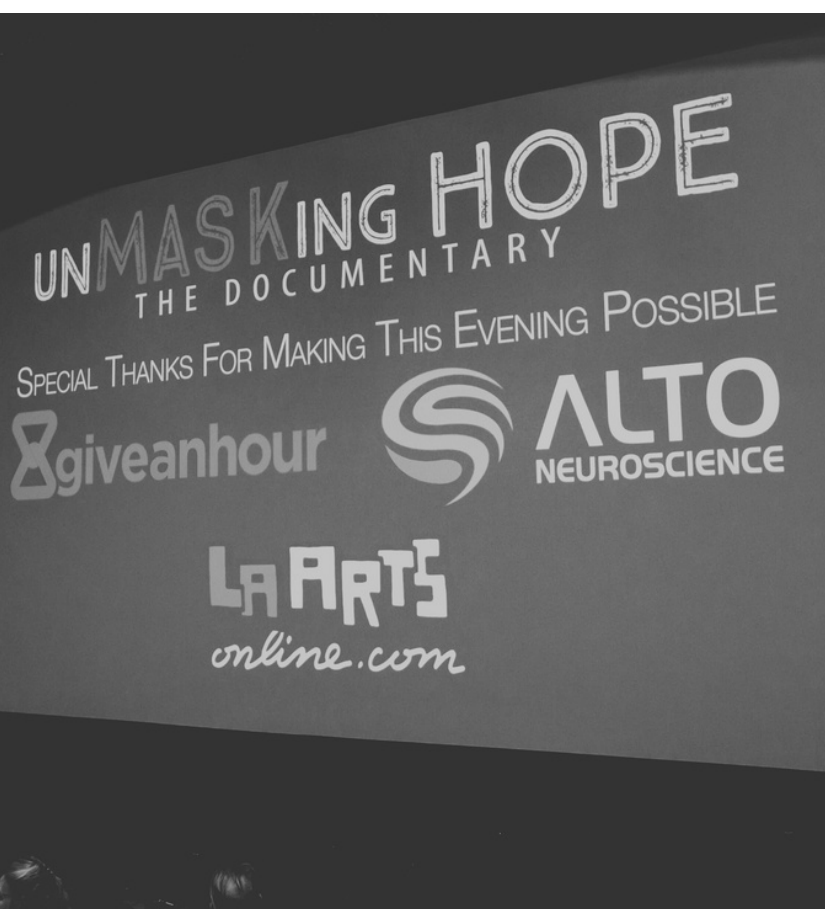


# UNMASKING HOPE



UNMASKING HOPE VIEWER GUIDE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  giveanhour



# THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

In a world where images of trauma have become an almost daily occurrence, there's a need to educate the general public about the lasting impact trauma has on survivors, their families and communities, and give people hope again for a better future.

## GOING BEHIND THE MASKS

unMASKing HOPE is a feature documentary from filmmaker Eric Christiansen (ECP) that explores the elusive face of trauma through the stories of a disparate group of survivors who have experienced unthinkable crises and don "masks" to hide their pain. Using in-depth personal interviews, soulful animation, scientific support and expert commentary, the film goes behind their MASKS to uncover their deepest wounds — the years of abuse, social stigma, and moral injury that have scarred their souls. As we are taken on their journey from seclusion to inclusion, we realize that the aggregate stories of these brave individuals share a powerful message of HOPE, inspiring us to unMASK our own HOPE.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ARE BROKEN DOWN INTO THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:**

- Traumatic Events
- Donning Masks to Cope
- Grief
- Isolation
- Seeking Care
- Peer Support
- Memorials
- Hope

**HOW DO YOU FEEL AFTER WATCHING UNMASKING HOPE?**





# UNMASKING HOPE

## THE DOCUMENTARY

### Traumatic Events

In the film, Dr. Shalev states that we should not expect to live our whole life without being traumatized one way or another. Trauma will happen and that big trauma occurs every day of the week. It does not need to be a war or 9/11.

Do you agree?

### What is trauma?

Severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience.

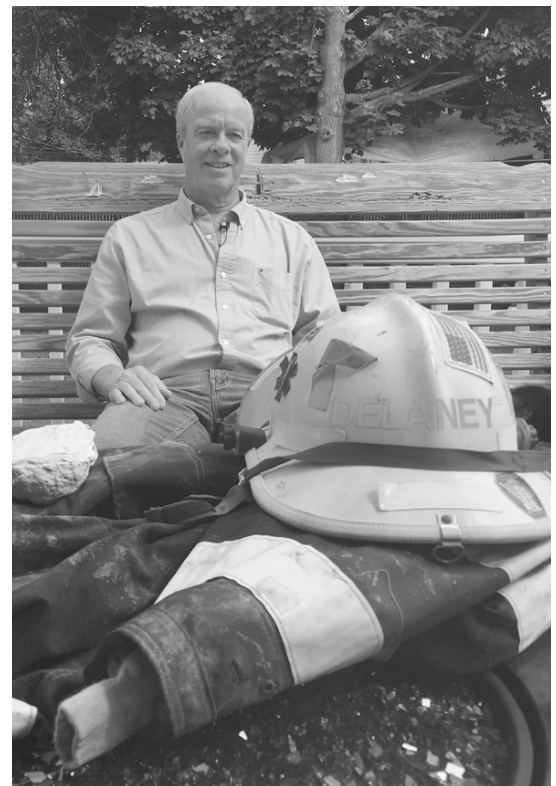
Have you experienced a trauma in your lifetime? Remember trauma doesn't always have to be a mass event.

Dr. Shalev challenges us, gives us something to think about, and asks:

What do you do with trauma once it happens? Are you going to completely try to forget about it? Put it aside? Is that going to become your new identity or is it going to become something that guides your life in a more positive way?

**What are your thoughts about Dr. Shalev's questions?**

What do you think about the way the media covers trauma? The media often sensationalizes trauma—there are many guides that would help the media avoid this habit. As a viewer, what can you do in order not to get wrapped up in the coverage yet still remain informed and empathetic?



## Donning Masks to Cope

Human beings process bad things that happen to them in different ways. Sometimes they mask their emotions so they won't have to endure the pain or other uncomfortable emotions they are feeling.

The term "Masking" refers to hiding our true emotions, especially when they are negative, behind a metaphorical mask. This is a protective mechanism we employ in our everyday lives, whether that's smiling at someone you don't like at a social event, using drugs to numb emotional pain or working long hours to avoid being alone.

**Have you ever "worn a mask" to hide something you were feeling? If so, what was the occasion?**

Dr. Etkin tells us that when a trauma happens, when our sense of safety is broken, it's shocking but we still have to function in the world. So, what people often do is they put on a mask, they put on a persona of what the world expects of them, because they've got to be able to perform for that world.

Take a few minutes to think about people in your life that you care about. Can you identify anyone that may be wearing a mask to help them cope? If so, can you commit to reaching out to them, checking on them and asking if you can help?





## Grief

### How would you describe grief?

Dr. Shear describes grief as the response to loss, a total body response. It's a psychological, biological, physical and spiritual response one. The core feature of grief is longing and yearning to have "it" back.

What are some situations in which you have experienced loss, and how did you grieve?

### Do you believe there is a timeline for grief?

What are some ways you have helped someone with their grief?



THE CORE FEATURE OF GRIEF  
IS LONGING AND YEARNING TO  
HAVE "IT" BACK

## Isolation

### Why do we isolate?

Dr. Etkin explains that when the world seem unsafe, the most logical thing you could do to protect yourself, is to isolate.

### What are the risks of isolating?

Dr. Etkin warns that when you isolate, you don't have the opportunity to experience things in life that might be corrective if you never give yourself the opportunity to experience that. It just locks in that sense of no safety anywhere around you, and so you isolate more. And that reinforces that sense. And you keep isolating.

Dr. Shear reminds us that from isolation comes loneliness. And that is one thing that we need to help trauma survivors to overcome.

What are some ways you can help someone if you notice they are using isolation as a protective measure?

## Seeking Care

Is asking for help hard for you?

Here is how Heidi and Becky explain it:

*Heidi: I mean, I think a part of going to therapy is the first part is you have to truly want to change. You know, the second you sit back and you just say to yourself, you know, this will take time. This is not easy. Everything will be okay. Then that's when I think the healing happens.*

*Becky: The hard part came after getting real treatment and then being real honest.*



HEIDI BENDER

Dr. Etkin explains that so much of just seeking help is normalizing that this happened.

Can you relate to what Dr. Etkin is saying? Has there been a time in your life when it took you awhile to accept that something tragic happened to you? Was there something in particular that helped you gain that acceptance?

**What does seeking care mean and/or look like for you? Does it have to be with a mental health professional?**

Do you know how to help someone if they are wanting to seek care from either a mental health professional, support group or other resource? Do you have a resource you can share with the group?



R. ETKIN EXPLAINS THAT SO MUCH OF JUST SEEKING HELP IS NORMALIZING THAT THIS HAPPENED.

## Peer Support

Dr. Etkin tells us that it's so critical to be able to find other people who at least share that sense of their safety being violated.

Why do you think that is true?

Here is what Dr. Etkin and Molly said in the film:

*Dr. Etkin: Until you see that other people can echo parts of what you went through, and you have an opportunity to reach your hand out, learn from them, and have them help you down the path to recovery.*

*Molly: We met through healing our traumas so that bonded us. But we utilize each other for support now.*

### **How does helping others, help the helper heal?**

Here is what Dr. Etkin and Molly said in the film:

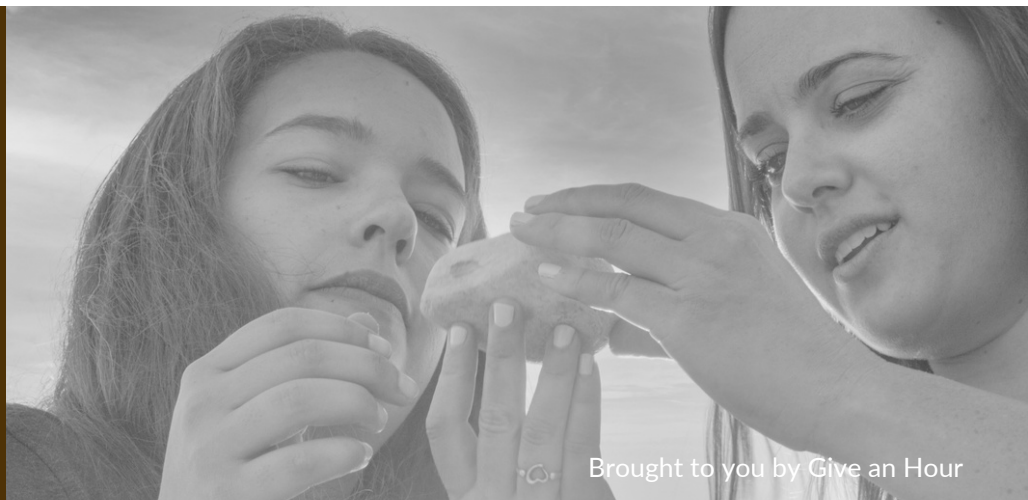
*Dr. Etkin: Once you've been able to recover, you know what that's like. It's almost a gift you want to give to somebody else who may not even know at that point to ask for help.*

*Molly: It was my turn to offer support, and it was my turn to help in any way I could. Selfishly, I did peer support because I was hitting a wall in my own healing and I wanted to be more involved in my own healing process. In order to do that, I needed to get more involved in other people's healing process.*

*Molly's Mom: Since she's been helping others, I've seen a big change in her. She can reach people, because of her experience.*

Is anyone part of a formal or informal peer support group? If yes, are you willing to share your experience of being part of a peer support group?

SINCE SHE'S BEEN  
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## Memorials

Have you experienced visiting a location that activated emotions inside of you that you were not even aware existed? If yes, are you willing to share that experience?

Do you agree with Dr. Etkin and Dr. Shear when they explain that visiting memorials provide survivors with a sense of control?

## Hope

Why do you think HOPE IS so important in someone's healing journey?

Often it requires us to find hope in our lives to be able to remove our mask. If we never take our masks off, it becomes problematic and we lose our authentic self in the process—damaging our health as well.

**What does HOPE feel and look like to you?**

Do you know of anyone who has been through trauma and found hope again? What did that look like?

Do you believe you can help someone find HOPE? Why or why not?

Human beings are resilient and as the film's experts shared, we can recover from most anything as long as we find HOPE.



HOPE IS THE GATEWAY TO HEALING

## Resource

<https://giveanhour.org/unmasking-hope/>

## Organizations

Give an Hour

[www.giveanhour.org](http://www.giveanhour.org)

Give an Hour is dedicated to transforming mental health by building strong and healthy individuals and communities. They provide no-cost counseling through a network of volunteer mental health professionals and empower the community through collaborative programs, peer support, and educational opportunities that benefit both clients and providers.

1in6

[www.1in6.org/about-1in6/](http://www.1in6.org/about-1in6/)

The mission of 1in6 is to help men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences live healthier, happier lives. Their mission also includes serving family members, friends, partners, and service providers by providing information and support resources on the web and in the community.

RAINN

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Crisis Text Line

Text SIGNS to 741741

Crisis Text Line is here for any crisis. A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds, all from our secure online platform. The volunteer Crisis Counselor will help you move from a hot moment to a cool moment.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline  
Call 988

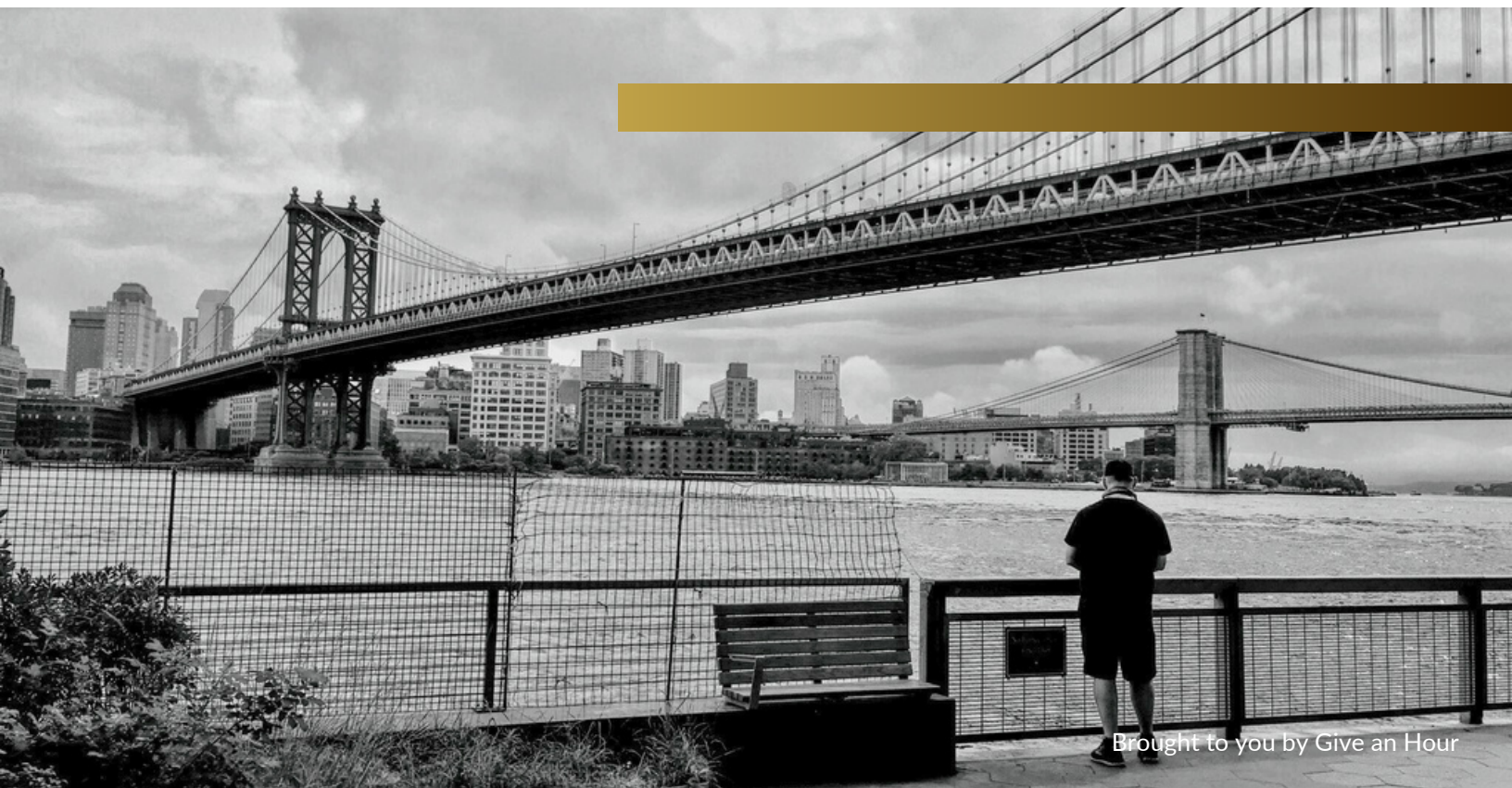
The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.

Reboot Recovery  
[www.rebootrecovery.com](http://www.rebootrecovery.com)

Reboot Recover helps people overcome trauma. Their faith-based trauma healing courses, training, and online community are open to anyone looking to move forward from trauma and tragedy into a better future.

Veteran Crisis Line  
[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, the Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource that connects you to a real person specially trained to support Veterans.





# COPING AFTER *Trauma*



All Feelings  
Are Okay



Keep Your Routine



Limit Input  
and Exposure



Prioritize Basic Needs



Ask For Help

## ALL FEELINGS ARE OK

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

## KEEP YOUR ROUTINE

Predictability can offer comfort.

## LIMIT INPUT AND EXPOSURE

Protect yourself from outside opinions and reliving the event.

## PRIORITIZE BASIC NEEDS

Keep focused on your 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.

# 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