

# Conifer Counseling Informational Page

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## Managing Media Trauma

When a traumatic event, crisis, or natural disaster occurs, the media extensively covers the story and extensively reports the details to the public. Ongoing exposure to these graphic reports can have unintentional consequences of collective trauma. How can we manage the trauma caused by media exposure?

**1. Take Notice of Your Feelings:** Check in with yourself and see if you are having strong reactions of fear, anxiety, disorientation, trouble sleeping/nightmares, changes in eating, pervasive thoughts of the event, feelings of lack of safety, overwhelming sadness. Notice them and put them in context. Understand they are related to the event coverage rather than your immediate situation.

**2. Express Your Feelings:** Express your anger. Cry if needed. Just because we are not living it, does not mean we are disconnected from the devastation of our fellow humans. We empathize with those across the country as much as we do with those right in front of us. There is a feeling of connection to those we see in the media clips and will feel sad and scared for them. Express this and permit yourself to be okay with having these feelings.

**3. Turn It Off:** If you are having overwhelming reactions, turn it off. Turn off the TV. Stop searching the internet. Take a break from social media. A digital detox is recommended under normal circumstances. A digital detox is a great way to shut down this influx of terror and allow yourself to manage those feelings.

**4. Mindfulness:** Meditation and mindfulness calm the stress responses. It refocuses us on the here and now. It directs our mind away from the "what ifs", worse case scenarios, and universalizing of the fear.

**5. Self-Care:** When we are mindful of our self, we can identify our needs and tend to them. Maintaining a regular sleep cycle, continuing with a normal eating pattern, regular activity, and engagement in enjoyable activities helps to manage stress responses to a collective trauma.

**6. Look for the Good:** Terroristic acts are meant to destroy a large population through fear and destruction. As a people, we respond with some very contrary behaviors. There are an abundance of stories of bravery and kindness within the tragedies. Use these stories to identify other good in your life and have appreciation for the things we do have.

**7. Don't Forget the Children:** Research supports there is a significant impact media exposure has on children, even with many miles between them and the location of the event. Some responses to take notice of are increased stress, anxiety, fear, grief, difficulty concentrating, themes of disasters or death in their play or art work, and behavior problems. You can help ease these reactions by helping them understand what is happening, put the event in context, explain how the media works as far as sensationalizing and their focus in crises, help them remember good things, reassure them of their safety, and be sure to validate their feelings.

If you or your child's responses become intrusive and disrupt daily functioning, it is okay to talk to professionals (e.g, school staff or counselors) about helping you or your child process what you are going through.

For further information regarding the trauma caused by media exposure, visit our blog at:

<http://www.conifercounseling.com/journal/2017/10/5/managing-media-trauma>