

10 Healthy Psychological Responses to Terrorism

(Courtesy of the *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, Every American Under Attack)

1. Never lose sight of the fact that the terrorist act is meant to create feelings of psychological uncertainty, personal vulnerability, fear, and terror.
 2. Once the terrorist act has occurred, the state of mind of the target population and its leadership serve to support or oppose the intent of the terrorist. Restoring a sense of community is critical.
 3. Consider pre-incident psychological resiliency training, as well as on-going psychological support during and after the terrorist attack for response personnel.
 4. Collaborate with mass media to provide ongoing information to all involved and affected populations. Credible information contradicts the sense of chaos. Information combats destructive rumors.
 5. Take whatever steps that seem necessary to re-establish a sense of physical safety for the public. Widely publicize these efforts to the degree security considerations will allow and make special consideration for children, elderly and infirm.
 6. Enlist the support of local political, educational, medical, business and religious leaders to add to communication that calm fears, provide personal crisis intervention and instill hope.
 7. Re-establish normal communication, transportation, school and work schedules as soon as possible.
 8. Symbols (flags, bumper stickers, signs and billboards) can help re-establish community cohesion.
 9. Initiate rituals to honor the survivors, the rescuers and the dead. Provide opportunities for others not directly affected, to assist those directly affected such as donations of blood, food, clothing, money. Communicate to all the notion that an effective way to honor the dead is to carry on and succeed in life. To do otherwise is to allow the terrorists to succeed in their aims.
 10. Be careful not to interfere prematurely with psychological support, which could be counterproductive.
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