



**Mental Health America of Franklin County**  
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## **Tips for College Students on Coping With the War and Terrorism**

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Many college students, faced with the war on Iraq and the ongoing threat of terrorist attacks, find that they now feel uncertain about a future for which they had just begun to plan. Some may be concerned about parents, relatives or friends in the military or who are living overseas. Others may wonder how they, themselves, may become directly involved in this crisis. No one is unaffected.

Whether you are directly or indirectly impacted, it is important to know that each person reacts differently to crisis, and it is common and expected to experience a range of responses. Emotional responses can appear immediately or sometimes develop months later. Students who live away from home may have a more difficult time coping without the reassurance of having family nearby.

Understanding how you feel and taking positive steps to address those feelings can help you cope. Remember that, while things may never be quite the same again, they will get better and you will feel better.

### **Common Responses to Crisis**

Disbelief and shock

Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating

Inability to focus on schoolwork and extracurricular activities

Apathy and emotional numbing

Sadness and depression

Fear and anxiety about the future

Intrusive thoughts; replaying events in our minds

Excessive worry about safety and vulnerability; feeling powerless

Crying for “no apparent reason”

Irritability and anger

Headaches and stomach problems

Difficulty sleeping

Extreme changes in eating patterns; loss of appetite or overeating

Excessive use of alcohol or drugs

## **Tips for Coping**

**Talk about it.** Encourage others to share their perspectives. Sharing your feelings with friends, classmates, professors, advisors and family will help you work through your emotions. Talking with others will relieve stress and help you realize that you're not alone with your feelings.

**Take care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest and exercise. Do things that you find relaxing and soothing. Remember to eat nutritious foods. Limit your exposure to media reports and images of the war. Avoid excessive drinking and risk-taking activities. Try to maintain your usual routines.

**Stay connected.** Maintain contact with friends and family. Make plans to visit family or others who can offer reassurance. If you can't visit them in person, increase your contact through phone calls and e-mails.

**Do something positive.** Do something that will help you gain a greater sense of control (for example: contact FIRSTLINK at 614-221-2255 for volunteer opportunities or give blood or take a First Aid class,). Whether you support or oppose the war, you can write letters to elected officials or get involved in campus activities, such as a candlelight vigil, benefit, discussion group or special lecture.

**Ask for help.** If you feel overwhelmed by events, remember that it's not a sign of weakness. Talk with a trusted friend, family member or spiritual advisor. Use on-campus resources, such as the college counseling center and health center, or reach out to community resources, such as faith leaders or the local mental health association.

If you have strong feelings that won't go away, or if you're troubled for longer than four to six weeks, you may want to seek professional help. Being unable to manage your responses to a crisis and to resume your regular activities may be a symptom of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. People who have existing mental health problems and those with a history of trauma may want to check in with a mental health care professional. Help is available. You don't have to deal with this alone.

### **For additional information, visit the following Websites:**

American College Counseling Association – [www.collegecounseling.org](http://www.collegecounseling.org)

American College Health Association – [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)

American College Personnel Association – [www.acpa.nche.edu](http://www.acpa.nche.edu)

Anxiety Disorders Association of America - [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information – [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

National Institute of Mental Health – [www.nimh.org](http://www.nimh.org)

National Panhellenic Conference – [www.npcwomen.org](http://www.npcwomen.org)

The BACCUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network – [www.bacchusgamma.org](http://www.bacchusgamma.org)

**Mental Health America of Franklin County** is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at [www.mhafc.org](http://www.mhafc.org).