



Mental Health America of Franklin County

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Drawing on Your Faith to Cope with War and Terrorism

Faced with the war with Iraq and the threat of terrorist attacks at home, Americans of every religious and spiritual tradition are wondering how best to move forward with their lives. In times of crisis, people often look to their faith for support and guidance in coping with the emotional and spiritual impact.

Each person reacts differently in a crisis and a range of responses are to be expected. These responses can appear immediately or sometimes develop months later. Here is a list of common emotional and physical responses to a crisis:

- Disbelief and shock
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- 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
- 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

For many people, war not only challenges their emotional and physical sense of well being, but also their spirituality. As a result, many Americans will turn to their faith through prayer and meditation to try to cope with their feelings and seek support, reassurance and understanding in this time of crisis.

While some people find solace in their faith, others may be troubled by questions and doubts. They may have difficulty sorting out the ambiguities of life and faith. What is important to remember is that trust, hope and strength are the most essential elements of all faiths.

Tips for People of Faith

Here are some ways people can use their faith to cope with anxiety and uncertainty:

Reflect. Reflect on ways to achieve peace on earth, and to support our service men and women, and those with loved ones in the military.

Connect. Spend more time with family, friends, and members of your house of worship. Reach out to others for strength and support. Draw strength from your faith.

Talk. By talking with others, you'll relieve anxiety and realize that others are having similar feelings and reactions. Talk with a friend, family member, doctor, religious or spiritual advisor, mental health professional, or anyone with whom you feel comfortable. Encourage those you care about, especially children, to do the same.

Act. Engage in positive activities for your spirit, mind and body. Candlelight vigils and prayer groups are good ways to encourage togetherness and reassurance. Consider doing things for others. Contact FIRSTLINK at 614-221-2255 for volunteer opportunities. You may want to organize activities, such as blood drives, creating "care packages for service men and women or writing letters to people in the military.

Get help. For most people, the fear and anxiety will end when peace is declared. But some people may have trouble getting back to their usual routines and normal feelings. Anyone who is troubled for longer than four to six weeks should seek professional help. People with existing mental health issues and those who have suffered past trauma may also want to check in with a mental healthcare provider.

For further help, talk with your minister, rabbi, priest, imam or other spiritual advisor. You can also call us at Mental Health America of Franklin County at 614-221-1441 or visit our web site www.mhafc.org.

Pastoral counselors are another resource. They are certified mental health professionals who have in-depth religious or theological training. Call 800-225-5603 for a referral to a Certified Pastoral Counselor in your area or visit www.aapc.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.