



**Mental Health America of Franklin County**  
2323 W. Fifth Ave. Suite 160, Columbus, OH 43204  
Telephone: (614) 221-1441 Fax: (614) 221-1491  
info@mhafc.org www.mhafc.org

## **Understanding Your Mental Health In Times of War and Terrorism**

---

Facing a new war and the continuing terrorist threat, Americans are experiencing many powerful emotions. For most people, the intense feelings of anxiety, sadness, grief and anger are healthy and appropriate. But some people may have a more profound and debilitating reaction to the war.

It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to trauma and each person has his or her own tolerance level for difficult feelings. To cope with these emotions, you can do some things for yourself and others. Experts say that remaining engaged in our world, staying connected with people, and being optimistic about the challenges ahead are key to riding through otherwise traumatic times. In fact, in times of turmoil, people can make changes that improve their lives and life satisfaction.

Knowing what is a normal response to an abnormal situation, and what signs might indicate you have a more serious problem, will help you determine if and when to seek help from a mental health professional.

### **Common Responses**

It is common to have difficulty managing your feelings during times of war, threat of terrorism or traumatic events. Many people will experience such symptoms as:

- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Inability to focus
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and depression
- Feeling powerless
- Extreme changes in eating patterns; loss of appetite or overeating
- Crying for “no apparent reason”
- Headaches and stomach problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Excessive use of alcohol and drugs

### **Signs to Seek Help**

When feelings do not go away or are so intense that they impair your ability to function in daily life, you may have a diagnosable disorder that requires mental healthcare. There are signs that can help you

determine whether you are having a normal reaction to our nation's crisis or if you're experiencing a mental health problem. These signs include:

- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about war or a traumatic event
- Being unable to stop thinking about the war or a traumatic event
- Avoiding thoughts, feelings or conversations that remind you of a traumatic event
- Avoiding places or people that remind you of a traumatic event
- Having a sense of a foreshortened future
- Continued difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Feeling jumpy or easily startled
- Being overly concerned about safety
- Feeling guilty, worthless or hopeless
- Not taking pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

If you are experiencing these symptoms, talking with a mental health professional or taking a mental-health screening test can help you understand how well you are coping. Take that step and get help.

### **Tips for Coping**

Here are some tips for coping in these difficult times:

**Talk about it.** By talking with others, you can relieve stress and realize that others share your feelings.

**Take care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest and exercise, avoid excessive drinking and eat properly. Avoid foods that are high in calories and fat.

**Limit exposure to images of the war.** Especially avoid television news programs.

**Do something positive.** Give blood or contact FIRSTLINK at 614-221-2255 for Columbus area volunteer opportunities. Whether you support or oppose the war, write letters to elected officials, take part in community meetings, etc.

**Ask for help.** Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Talk with a trusted relative, friend or spiritual advisor. If you want professional help, obtain a referral for services from Mental Health America of Franklin County by calling 614-221-1441.

**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).