

Supporting Young People After a Distressing Event



The recent attack has been very distressing and stressful. People have had different experiences during and after the event, especially if they were close to or identify with one of the students, or have a connection to the vicinity. This attack may also act as a reminder of past violent events. Recovery time depends on varying experiences.

Over time, most people regain their balance, and return to normal routines, while others may struggle longer. Most people will recover with the support of friends, their peer group, family and their community. Some people may need more formal support. There is an opportunity to reduce the long term impact of this on the young people who may be most directly affected.

Immediate Response

- It's important to normalise reactions.
- It's completely understandable to feel overwhelmed; something extreme happened in a city where they previously felt safe.
- That sense of safety was violated - and is understandably upsetting.

Highlight the Helpers

- Highlight acts of solidarity from the community, those who helped and supported or demonstrated shared values (avoid graphic detail such as paramedics or the sequence of events related to the incident)
- Share positive ways people can support or respond: attending events, donations, volunteering etc.

Self-care Tips

- **Support** - prioritize spending time with people you care about and feel comfortable with and avoid spending too much time alone
- **Physical health** - stick to your routine, get enough sleep, stay hydrated, eat healthily, exercise, avoid drugs/alcohol, get outside, ideally in nature or a park
- **Safe social media** - avoid 'doomscrolling' on social media or constantly watching news updates

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Language

Use clear and calm language and not over-medicalise.

Some examples:

- We are experiencing reactions (not symptoms)
- Avoid wording like 'trauma' and 'traumatising' (most people will recover on their own and will not develop trauma)
- People are not 'in shock' (that is a medical condition), but may have intense feelings

Communication

- An overwhelmed brain has difficulty comprehending. Communication should be short and simple.
- Language should be calm, neutral and de-escalating. This is particularly important for the media.
- Compassion and validating feelings are vital. Some may not want to talk and that's fine too. Be flexible.
- Let people know you care and that you are there for them, keep in touch, repeat offer of help if needed.
- Don't make anyone talk if they don't want to. Be prepared to 'reach in' if you see someone struggling.

Coping Techniques

For help with intense feelings use 'go to' tried and tested self-help strategies and talk to trusted others.

Reactions may last a while - talk to someone if they're still a worry after a few weeks.

- **Checking in with yourself/others**
[WellbeingAndCoping.net](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/) | [How are you feeling right now?](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/how-are-you-feeling-right-now/)
- **30 second strategies** if overwhelmed
[WellbeingAndCoping.net](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/things-you-can-do-in-about-30-seconds/) | [Things you can do in about 30 seconds](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/things-you-can-do-in-about-30-seconds/)
- **Student Health App** free to download on the [Apple App Store](https://www.apple.com/uk/app-store/) and [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.studenthealth).
- **Safety Plan** if distressed [Staying Safe | from suicidal thoughts](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/staying-safe-from-suicidal-thoughts/)
- **Advice for supporting a young person**
[Staying Safe](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/staying-safe)
- **Need Help Right now?** 24/7 sources of support
[Staying Safe](https://www.wellbeingandcoping.net/staying-safe)