

7 Tips to Decrease Fear and Anxiety After a Mass Shooting

It's an unfortunate truth that mass shootings have become commonplace in our lives. Whether you are a survivor of a mass shooting or not, the fear and anxiety that accompanies our current state of the world can be debilitating. After an active shooter incident or a mass shooting, it's essential to check in with ourselves and others to protect and balance our mental health.

Fear is a normal, healthy response to violence, but excessive fear for ourselves, our families and friends is harmful and detrimental to living our best lives. Responses to these types of tragedies vary, from one person being very impacted/scared, to another who may not have the same reaction.

In terms of the effects on the workplace, in the aftermath of either a local shooting or one that gets national news, workplace productivity drops. Co-workers chat about the horrific incident and their fears around whether their company has the necessary resources to protect them.

Use the 7 tips below to help your co-workers, family and friends navigate these very difficult realities:

1. **Avoid overexposure to media.** Step away from the tv, radio and internet. We can stay informed while minimizing our exposure to the news of the shootings. Catch the details but be careful that you or your children are not being over exposed to it. Being bombarded with images, sounds and media hype will overwhelm our brains and send us into a fearful place.
2. **Acknowledge and talk about your feelings.** It is important for us to share our feelings, even if you were not directly involved in the event. Discussing how you are reacting to the tragedy helps others understand and support you.

3. **Check in with the children in your life.** Ask them what they know, how they feel, and listen to their concerns. Be matter of fact with them and come from a place of strength, not from a place of fear. Creating open communication reduces stress for children and adults.

4. **Be kind!** Whether in the workplace or in public, we don't know who is dealing with past trauma, PTSD, emotional or mental illness. Gun violence, active shooter and mass shooting incidents can be triggers for anyone suffering from trauma.

5. **Create an awareness of your surroundings.** Not in a fearful way, rather in an empowering way. Being in fear limits our awareness. Pay attention to exits in the places that you frequent most. Watch for anyone exhibiting unusual behavior and trust that you are building strength and confidence in choosing this awareness. (Dive deeper into [Situational Awareness](#).)

6. **Focus on what you *can* do.** Shootings can make us feel out-of-control and small. Finding something positive to do can help your negative feelings. Can you give blood or donate to a survivors' fund? If you are unable to donate, then focus on getting back to your normal routines as quickly as possible. There is safety and comfort in our normalcy.

7. **Seek support.** If your feelings are too intense or your fear seems unbearable, reach out for professional help. Talking to a licensed therapist can help with extreme fear and get you back to living a happy life.