

Feelings of Guilt After a Traumatic Event

Finding Support and Moving Forward



Eight Strategies to Overcoming Feelings of Guilt

- Accept that you are not in control
- Talk with someone
- Keep moving
- Meditate or listen to music
- Pay attention to your health
- Reestablish routines
- Find moments of joy
- Don't let negative thoughts consume you

Guilt is a common emotion

When unsettling or traumatic events happen in our community, it is common to search for information that will help settle our fears.

Unfortunately, many times, we find ourselves in a very uneasy “wait and see” situation. Hours and days can feel like an eternity and leave us feeling scared, concerned, and confused.

As time moves on, you may find other strong emotions start to surface – guilt, self-blame and even shame. Guilt is a common emotion that accompanies other grief-related feelings as we try to make sense out of something that may not make sense. You may question whether or not you reacted in the best way. While we can all learn from the past, one cannot change the past.

Strategies to overcome guilt

- **Accept that you are not in control.** Traumatic events are not planned and recognize you were doing the best you could with what you knew.
- **Talk with someone.** Connect and talk to others who can help you process your feelings. Shame cannot survive being spoken.
- **Keep moving.** Big emotions settle in the body. Staying active can help process emotions - take deep breaths, gently stretch, walk.
- **Meditate or listen to music.** These are effective ways to calm the mind, body and emotions.
- **Pay attention to your physical health and care.** Eat nourishing meals and snacks, get enough rest, and drink plenty of water.
- **Reestablish routines.** Keep doing your normal daily activities. This can help you regain a sense of control and reduce anxiety.
- **Know that it is okay to celebrate and have moments of joy.** Return to doing things you enjoy as a family and spending time with friends.
- **Don't let negative thoughts consume you.** If you are having difficulty making sense of the trauma or questioning why this event happened, seek out a mental health professional for support. Remember, children's stress may be a reflection of how their parents handle stress.



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