

Change and uncertainty provide for many "teachable moments." Instead of feeling out of control, you can take on the challenges that change and uncertainty bring to your life with a renewed sense of appreciation for how important it is to function as a lifelong learner. The overall result can be that, rather than feeling helpless, you can gain a sense of empowerment and appreciate your accomplishments.



### **Be gentle with yourself and others.**

As Americans, a strong work ethic motivates us to keep going. People sometimes can find comfort in their work, through what they achieve and accomplish. Remember, though, that people also may need to slow down a bit and drive more gently when

there are "bumps" in the road.

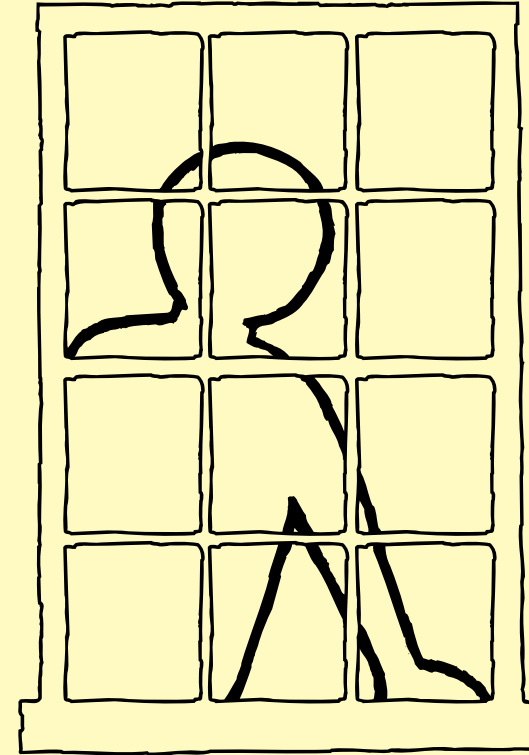
Insist on being patient with yourself. Recovery from trauma and loss takes time. It makes good practical sense to take good care of yourself so that you can do a good job of providing for others.

Extend that gift of patience and tolerance to your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers who also may be having a difficult time. They may need your support and encouragement.

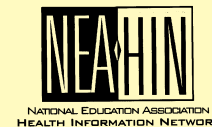
### **How to know when help is needed?**

Health and mental health professionals and faith/spiritual leaders can help people get through difficult times. It's important to seek help when:

- "Symptoms" are more severe or persist longer than what most people experience – beyond a reasonable, expected adjustment period;
- A person's capacity to function and participate in day-to-day life has been significantly impacted; or
- Alcohol or other substances are being used to self-medicate.



## **Dealing with trauma and loss: Practical strategies for enhancing resilience.**

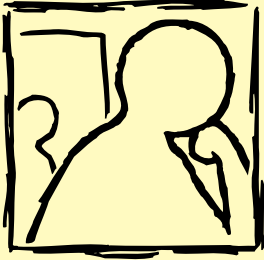


[www.neahin.org](http://www.neahin.org)  
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## Recognize that stress "symptoms" can be normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Under ordinary circumstances, your defense mechanisms work unconsciously and, therefore, go unnoticed. They can, however, become more noticeable after exposure to a traumatic event, such as the September 11th terrorist attacks. When people experience "symptoms" of post-traumatic stress, they may begin to worry about their mental health. Yet, in extraordinary situations, having "symptoms" actually can be an indication that healthy psychological defenses are working over-time. Although stress "symptoms" may be irritating or troubling at times, it is helpful to recognize that they often are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

What's the bottom line? Have faith in what we know! Human beings have an amazing capacity for resilience and adaptation. Research and experience tell us that most people feel and function better over time. Eventually, for most people, "symptoms" of stress lessen or disappear entirely,

Common "symptoms" after exposure to trauma or loss
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical: fatigue, appetite change, sleep loss, tension, being more accident prone.</li> <li>• Cognitive: "spacing out," decreased ability to focus or concentrate, forgetfulness.</li> <li>• Emotional: frustration, anxiety, depression, mood swings, nightmares.</li> <li>• Social: isolation from others, intolerance, lashing out, distrust, lowered sex drive.</li> <li>• Spiritual: emptiness, loss of direction, doubt, apathy.</li> </ul>

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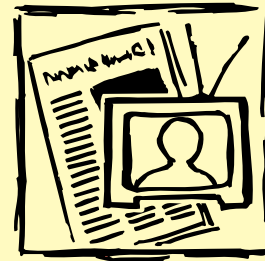
## Create a plan of action for times when there's more to process than your processor can handle.

Just like computers, people sometimes need to re-boot. Creating and implementing a plan of action requires an investment of time devoted to renewing energy and restoring equilibrium. At a minimum, remember to take time to breathe. Because of the mind-body connection, taking slow, deep breaths for just a few minutes actually can reduce stress. In situations that

are extraordinarily demanding, people sometimes need to add to their capacity by taking themselves "off-line" so they can engage in specific self-care and maintenance activities.

Often, this is best accomplished by doing ordinary kinds of things. Get a good night's sleep by maintaining a regular schedule for going to bed and rising. Eat nutritious meals. Seek quality time with people who anchor you emotionally. Take a warm, soothing bath. Work out at the gym. Engage in a favorite hobby or sport. Enjoy nature and being outdoors. Connect with the arts. Share a meal with family or friends.

Use your plan of action to replenish yourself physically, psychologically and spiritually in the ways that you know work for you.



## Get media wise – choose your news.

Because there's so much content to choose from, calling on your media literacy skills can greatly enhance your plan of action. Engage pro-actively, rather than passively, as a media consumer. Research shows that exercising a degree of personal control over exposure to what's covered in the media can contribute significantly to stress management. What is it that you really want to see, hear, or read? Get specific. Be decisive.

On a practical level, being media wise also can add to your capacity for day-to-day time management. After all, in addition to staying informed, you can best be on top of your game by getting enough sleep and having enough time to attend to other important aspects of your life, like engaging in quality time with your family, especially your kids.



## Give yourself permission to not know all the answers.

Take comfort in understanding that the new sense of uncertainty that you're experiencing is probably shared by others – including those for whom you have the greatest respect and admiration.