

# PLU Counseling Center

## Office Hours:

Monday - Friday  
8:00-noon, 1pm-5pm

## Services:

- Individual short-term counseling
- Group workshops
- Psychiatry Services

## PLU COUNSELING, HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

Counseling Center  
12180 Park Avenue South  
Tacoma, WA 98447

253-535-7206

[counseling@plu.edu](mailto:counseling@plu.edu)

[www.plu.edu/chws](http://www.plu.edu/chws)



# Taking Care of Your Emotional Health after a Difficult Event

## **EACH POSITIVE ACTION YOU TAKE CAN HELP YOU FEEL BETTER AND MORE IN CONTROL.**

Tragedy can bring about significant stress. This is especially true if you have experienced a previous difficult event. The good news is that many people have experience coping with stressful life events and are naturally resilient—meaning we are designed to bounce back from difficult times. Here is some information on how to recognize your current feelings and tips for taking care of the emotional health of you, your family and your friends.

### **What you may be feeling now**

When we experience a disaster or other stressful life event, we can have a variety of reactions. Many of these are common responses to difficult situations. These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained.
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics.
- Feelings that are intense and unpredictable.
- Frustration occurring more quickly and more often.
- Arguing more with family and friends.
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried.
- Experiencing changes in your appetite or sleep patterns.
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, nausea, or chest pain.

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have and take small steps toward recovery. Some suggestions are listed below.

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### How to Feel Better

**Take care of your safety.** Find a safe place to stay and make sure your physical health needs and those of your family are addressed. Seek medical attention, if necessary.

**Eat healthy.** During times of stress, try to maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water.

**Rest.** With so much to do, it may be difficult to have enough time to rest or get adequate sleep. Giving your body and mind a break can boost your ability to cope with the stress you may be experiencing.

**Limit your exposure to the news.** Repeatedly exposing yourself to upsetting photographs and videos can make it more difficult to recover.

**Stay connected with family and friends.** Giving and getting support is one of the most important things you can do.

**Be patient with yourself and with those around you.** Recognize that everyone is stressed and may need some time to put their feelings and thoughts in order. Journaling can be very helpful.

**Set priorities.** Tackle tasks in small steps.

**Gather information** about assistance and resources that will help you and your family members meet your disaster-related needs.

**Stay positive.** Remind yourself of how you've successfully gotten through difficult times in the past. Reach out when you need support, and help others when they need it.

### If you still don't feel better ...

Many people have experience coping with stressful life events and typically feel better after a few days. Others find that their stress does not go away as quickly as they would like and it influences their relationships with their family, friends and others. If you find yourself or a loved one experiencing some of the feelings and reactions listed below for 2 weeks or longer, this may be a sign that you need to reach out for additional assistance.

- Crying spells or bursts of anger
- Difficulty eating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Losing interest in things
- Increased physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches
- Fatigue
- Feeling guilty, helpless or hopeless
- Avoiding family and friends

For additional help, you can contact the **Counseling Center 253-535-7206** located at **AUC 300** or the **PLU Crisis Line** at **253-535-7075**.

Please seek immediate help if you or someone you know is feeling that life isn't worth living or if you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others. You can also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org).

Adapted from Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services. (2013). A Psychological First Aid Guide for Ohio College and Universities: Supporting Students, Faculty and Staff After a Crisis or Other Emergency. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Department of Mental Health.

