

# RESPONSE

# LIFE ADVISOR

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## Starting to Heal Following National Tragedies



Shootings in places of worship, such as the incident that occurred in Michigan this past weekend at a church, are tragic acts of violence that not only claim innocent lives but also violate spaces meant for peace, reflection, and community. Such incidents impact not only the immediate victims and communities but also send ripples of fear and grief across broader society, challenging our shared values of safety, respect, and coexistence. Tragic events can cause feelings of disillusionment, a sense of unreality and feeling lost. Talking can help to serve as a reality check; that the unbelievable events are also unbelievable to others, as well and the loss of equilibrium is a shared experience.

Sadly, this past weekend saw yet more violence in spaces where people gathered expecting safety. In North Carolina, a shooting at a waterfront bar disrupted a peaceful evening. Meanwhile, in Texas, a shooting at a casino shattered the sense of security in a place meant for leisure and community. While these incidents did not occur in houses of worship, they reflect the same devastating pattern of violence invading spaces meant for connection, enjoyment, and peace.

Hopelessness, sadness and despair are also common reactions to gun violence. These overwhelming feelings can fester and lead to more emotional complications. To prevent becoming overwhelmed it's important to take a break from the continuous coverage and commentary. Given the proliferation of screens in our lives, it can be hard to avoid, but turning off the TV and keeping the phone out of sight can be small, helpful steps. Or have planned exposure; for example, allow 10 minutes at lunch time for updates, and 10 minutes after dinner. This way, wallowing and ruminating, which can quickly become unhealthy, can be avoided or at least minimized.

People who have suffered a previous trauma may have old, unpleasant feelings suddenly return when processing recent events. This is commonly being referred to as being "triggered". If this should happen, it doesn't necessarily mean the person lost any progress made in coping and adapting with the original tragedy. In fact, feeling triggered and having old feelings resurface is common and should be expected from time to time. In situations where someone may become overwhelmed, it may be helpful for a brief tune-up with a mental health professional, easily accessed through the Life Advisor EAP.

It's hard to not be affected by multiple, mass crimes in seemingly safe places. Even people who don't report feeling impacted will be wise to take care of themselves as a healthy preemptive way to maintain a sense of balance. This includes ensuring adequate, quality sleep, proper nutrition, exercise, and healthy, non-anxiety producing socialization is also critically important in a self-care regiment.

### **A Path Forward:**

While no words or actions can fully erase the pain of such tragedies, coming together as a community rooted in compassion, resilience, and a shared commitment to peace can pave the way forward. Healing is a long journey, but through solidarity and action, communities can reclaim their sacred spaces and renew their hope.

Should anyone feel challenged in their ability to function in their daily lives, call your Life Advisor EAP now to help move through this difficult time.

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