

# Taking Care of Yourself following a Traumatic Event

## Important Things to know:

- Overwhelming and traumatic events have significant effects on our emotions, behaviors, physical health, cognition/thought process.
- Our systems react to witnessing these events (like watching on TV) as if it is happening to us.
- Our beliefs about the world being safe are effected.

## You may experience:

- Being fearful/ anxious; adrenaline rush with heart racing, body shaking, difficulty breathing, dry mouth
- easily frustrated, quick to anger, easily startled, numb, detached, withdrawing from friends, family, life
- easily distracted, memory lapses, unable to complete simple tasks
- preoccupied with event: can't stop thinking about it, watching on TV, experiencing "I am in it"
- feeling exhausted, sleeping difficulties, wanting to drink alcohol more, eat more or eat less

## You Can help Yourself by:

- **Stay Connected:** Reach out and communicate to those who are supportive. Limit contact to those who are not supportive. Be with friends, family, work associates. It is ok to take time for yourself too, just be careful not to isolate.
- **Participate in Positive Behaviors:** **Water** intake is essential. Our bodies dehydrate with stress, even a little stress, so drinking plenty of water helps our physical system to function properly. **Movement** is very important like walking, running, swimming or some form of aerobic exercise. It does not have to be intense exercise just enough to get the heart rate up for a few minutes. Even a short walk can help. **Eat healthy food** – limit sugar intake and stick with protein, healthy vegetables, whole grains. **Sleep Hygiene:** Like water, healthy food, and movement **Sleep** is necessary to help us tolerate and process the difficulties we are facing. Stress can disrupt sleep. Our bodies need 7/8 hours of sleep per night. Contact with electronics (tv, phone, computers) right before going to bed can disrupt sleep. If you have a TV in your bedroom shut it off. Limit caffeine intake after noon time. Use stress reducing procedures like breathing, meditation, self acupressure techniques like Tapas Acupressure Technique® to help you get to sleep or return to sleep if you wake up.
- **Avoid excessive behaviors** like drinking alcohol, eating, sleeping, working too much as a way to avoid feeling, thinking and being aware of your reactions. Stay balanced by taking care of yourself and encouraging your loved ones to take care of themselves. Seek help from a counselor trained in trauma to help you process the effects of the event.

**Breathing Exercise:** Practice up to 10 minutes, even a few minutes can help reduce anxiety

Directions: 6 Breaths/minute: Inhale for the count of 5 seconds with a gentle continuous breathe... then

Exhale for the count of 5 seconds with a gentle continuous breathe

Continue to do this for as long as you want. Useful to reduce anxiety, sleep disturbances.

**Tapas Acupressure Technique:** Useful for quickly reducing stressful reactions, quieting the mind & body. Hold forehead and back of head with palm of hands while putting attention on the problem. Hold for about a minute or until you feel more calm. Go to [www.tatlife.com](http://www.tatlife.com) to download TAT for a stressful event. To find a trained certified TAT Professional call Pat Thatcher at 617-661-1277 or go to [www.tatlife.com](http://www.tatlife.com)

**EMDRIA Trauma Response Team** is a group of trained professionals in utilizing EMDR with recent traumatic events. This technique has been proven to help clear the effects of trauma. They are offering up to three free sessions to alleviate the stress related to the Boston bombings. For more information and to access services email [bostonareaTRN@emdrhap.org](mailto:bostonareaTRN@emdrhap.org) or call 508-922-6117