



finding hope & healing: life after tragedy

ARTICLE BRITTNEY
HENDERSON, LA, MFT

OUR COMMUNITY WAS RECENTLY DEVASTATED BY UNFATHOMABLE EVENTS.

First, the horrific tragedy of the Borderline Bar shooting, followed immediately by the devastating wildfires. These shocking events, coupled with the holiday season, fuel intensified feelings of hopelessness, emotional dysregulation, forgetfulness, sadness, confusion, depression, anxiety, inability to regulate emotions, inability to cope with life stressors, and an overall impaired ability to function in daily life. Intense fear, lack of trust and diminished sense of safety are common experiences of those subjected to the trauma, grief and loss from sudden unexpected tragedies.

With support, individuals can heal and regain the ability to function and move forward in their lives. If you are struggling, please reach out and seek help and support now. It is of the utmost importance to know that you are incredibly resilient, sometimes far more so than you could ever imagine.

NECESSARY STEPS FOR HEALING AND MOVING FORWARD:

- 01** Acknowledge your pain.
- 02** Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
- 03** Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you.
- 04** Seek out face-to-face support from people who care about you.
- 05** Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically.
- 06** Recognize the difference between grief and depression.

Impact of Trauma

Trauma impacts people differently, depending on their age and other situational factors:

CHILDREN.

Children may appear unaffected by the recent tragedies and trauma. Please remember, they lack the ability and knowledge that adults have. Children may display regressive behaviors (bedwetting, sleep disturbance, fear of being alone, being clingy, lack of trust in others/strangers, intense fear of losing loved ones, tantrums). These are normal reactions to trauma. As a parent or guardian, it is essential that we remain caring and gentle, patient and attentive and provide extra support to traumatized children. Validate their feelings and do not minimize their experience. Reassure children that they are safe right now, and that you will always do your best to protect them.

ADOLESCENTS.

Adolescents are more likely to minimize and downplay their emotional distress as a way to protect their parents and siblings. They may fear "burdening" their families or causing additional distress. Provide support for teens, assure them that you are okay and there for them. Encourage them to share their emotions; listen and ask about their feelings. Encourage them to talk, but do not pressure them to do so. Educate yourself and seek help to guide you and your loved ones through difficult times.

Tips for coping with tragedy, grief and loss:

- + Give yourself time to accept and acclimate to your "new normal."
- + Ask for help and seek support from those you trust.
- + Share your story and experience.
- + Attend support/therapy groups.
- + Engage in healthy behaviors to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress.
- + Establish or reestablish routines.
- + Give yourself permission to pause and avoid making major life decisions.
- + Seek professional help if emotional distress becomes too much.
- + Be kind to yourself, engage in daily self-care, and be patient.
- + Remember, there is no timeline for grief. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Brittney Henderson, MA, LMFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Westlake Village. She can be reached at 424.344.5722, extension 3101.

THESE RESOURCES FOR COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS CAN HELP YOU START THE HEALING PROCESS TODAY!

Agencies

- + American Red Cross
- + National Organization for Victim's Assistance (NOVA)
- + NAMI
- + Salvation Army
- + Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, www.atss.info
- + Compassionate Friends

Hotlines

- + 24/7 Crisis hotline: 800.854.7771
- + Ventura County Mobile Crisis Response Team: 24/7 response: 866.998.2243
- + National Hopeline Network: 800.784.2433
- + National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800.273.TALK
- + National Youth Crisis Hotline: 800.448.4663
- + Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 800.662.HELP (4357)
- + Crisis Textline: Text "HOME" to 741741

Local Grief & Loss Support Groups

- + Coping with Grief and Loss
Kimberly Robbins, PsyD, 4055 East Thousand Oaks Blvd, Suite 215, Thousand Oaks, California 91362, 818.946.0786
- + Healing Grief and Loss
Kellie Canady, AMFT, 5655 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 225 Westlake Village, California 91362, 805.954.9399
- + Sensing Safety Support Group
Nancy Herzenach, LMFT, Westlake Village, California 91361, 805.319.7951
- + Teen Trauma Support Group
Almira Agosto, LMFT, Life Connections Counseling
860 Hampshire Road, Suite L, Westlake Village, California 91361, 818.804.6041