



Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's

RESILIENCY & JUSTICE CENTER

Tips for Supporting Loved Ones with Trauma

Here are some ideas for those of you who love and care about someone you know who has experienced trauma. Be aware that everyone grieves and copes with trauma in different ways and over varying lengths of time. The way that your loved one copes may be very different from yours. These suggestions from mental health experts may help you support someone you love:

- **Listen.** Talking about what happened or what they are going through may be difficult to hear, but it can be very healing for them. You can offer the opportunity for them to be heard and supported. “Active listening” is a skill that can be used by anyone and can be very helpful. This means devoting your attention to the act of listening carefully, acknowledging what you hear, and asking questions.
- **Don't judge.** Assume a position of curiosity about how they're managing through difficult times. Often, they're already struggling with internal judgments about their reactions. Judgments can be a heavy burden and you don't want to add to their trauma. You can help by offering support without implying that they should or shouldn't have done something or be doing something differently. Avoid referring to the right or wrong thing to do.
- **Reach out.** Current circumstances may make it more difficult for those coping with trauma to initiate a connection with you. They may feel that they don't want to burden you with their difficulties. Utilize safe and newly available methods of staying connected to initiate a genuine and caring conversation.
- **Don't diagnose.** Feelings of grief, pain, rage, despair, and fear are normal after a traumatic event. Allow time and space for them to work through things in their own time and in their own way.
- **Recognize signs and symptoms.** Symptoms caused by trauma include difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, fatigue, isolation, increased use of drugs or alcohol, avoidance of people or places that are reminders of the traumatic event, and inability to feel or control emotions.
- **Encourage them to seek counseling.** If your loved one is struggling with memories, flashbacks, or reminders, or is too overwhelmed to manage daily tasks, encourage and normalize the use of the support that's available. It's not uncommon for survivors of mass violence to wait to seek counseling months or even years after an event. Readiness to engage in services happens at a different pace for everyone, but support from those who care about them can be helpful.



- **Take care of yourself.** Supporting a person dealing with deep pain can be distressing and overwhelming for you. Give yourself permission to do the little things that bring you joy as you provide support to someone. Be aware of your own level of distress, energy, and need for support. You may feel frustrated, overwhelmed, or confused. Taking care of your own needs helps you to be able to continue to be supportive. If you feel it might be helpful, you might consider seeking support for yourself.

Help Is Here for You and Those You Love

It is difficult to witness the aftermath of a traumatic event that affects someone you know, love, or care for. Remember that being a support to them is both a wonderful gift and a difficult place to be.

The Resiliency & Justice Center is here for anyone impacted by trauma, and that includes assistance for those who are helping someone navigate the effects of a violent crime.

Call us at 702-455-AIDE (2433) or email resiliencyandjustice@lacsns.org for help. For 24/7 support, you can connect with a trained crisis counselor in English or Spanish by calling or texting 988 or going to 988lifeline.org.

