



A Year Later: Self-Care Tips for Adults Coping with Stress after a Disaster*

Building a Healthy Boston

As the one year anniversary of the 2013 Boston Marathon tragedy approaches, it is very normal and expected for people to feel stress and anxiety. Knowing the signs of stress, how to ease stress, and when to ask for help is important.

Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Disaster Events

- No one who witnesses or experiences an event like the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings is untouched by the tragedy.
- It is normal to feel anxious about your own and your family's safety.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging your feelings helps you to recover.
- Focusing on your strengths and abilities helps you to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.
- It is common to want to strike back at people who have caused great pain. Nothing good, however, is accomplished by hateful language or actions.

Signs that Adults May Need Stress Management Assistance

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood swings
- Crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

**Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings (anger, sorrow, and other emotions) even though it may be difficult. Understand that there is no time table for your feelings and that everyone experiences trauma differently. You may have talked about your feelings right after the marathon, or you may only now be ready to talk about them one year later.
- Do not hold yourself responsible for what happened at the marathon.
- Continue with your physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life and maintaining a healthy outlook. Nutritious eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, and meditation all help you to maintain a healthy outlook.
- Keep a normal household and daily routine, limiting overly demanding responsibilities of yourself and your family.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials and rituals that you are comfortable with, as a way to express your feelings and commemorate what happened on Marathon Monday.
- Use your family, friends, community groups, and faith-based institutions for ongoing support.
- Establish an emergency plan (how you will get to a safe place, how you will contact one another, how you will get back together) when you attend your next event with large crowds. Having a plan in place can provide you and your family with a feeling of security.

When to Seek Help

If self-help strategies are not helping or you find that you are using drugs and/or alcohol in order to cope, you may wish to seek professional assistance to help you with your stress symptoms.

Where to Call for Help

If you need help finding a counselor or a mental health clinician in Boston, call the Mayor's Health Line at 617-534-5050 or Toll-Free at 1-800-847-0710.