



# Carry on

## Coping after violence

### Aetna Resources For Living<sup>SM</sup>

Feeling safe is important. It lets us thrive and grow. But violence can make us feel like we just need to survive. So how do you get back to being you?

#### How you might be affected

If you've been exposed to violence, you've gone through an event that may challenge your beliefs about the world. You could feel shaken and confused. You may notice that you feel:

- Fearful, confused or angry
- Worried about new threats
- Concerned about your own safety or that of others
- Irritable
- Forgetful or unable to concentrate

And stress can show up in your body. So you may experience:

- Stomach upset or pain
- Heaviness or pain in your chest
- Problems getting to sleep or staying asleep, as well as increased nightmares

- Appetite changes — you may want to eat too much or not at all
- Muscle aches and pains

*Note:* It's important not to assume that stress is behind physical symptoms. Be sure to consult with your doctor if you're having physical pain or other changes such as those mentioned above.

#### How to cope

If you're trying to work through the aftermath of a violent event, you could be under a lot of stress. This puts strain on both your mind and body. So it's important to take care of your health. Here are some tips:

- **Eat well.** Be gentle on your stomach. Eat small, evenly spaced meals or snacks. And go for foods that are easy to digest.
- **Get rest.** Try to get a healthy amount of sleep. Being well-rested helps you function better.
- **Move your body.** Find ways to get some exercise. This can help reduce physical stress and help you think more clearly.



- **Be patient.** People cope in their own ways and in their own time. So be patient — with yourself and others. Limit the use of alcohol or other drugs, unless prescribed by your doctor.
- **Minimize media.** Reading or watching the news all the time can leave you feeling worse. Get the facts and then stop watching or reading.

### When to get help

Sometimes our reactions to violence may overwhelm our normal coping skills. It can help to talk to a mental health professional. You may want to call us if it's been a few weeks and you still notice the following symptoms:

- Problems getting through day-to-day life
- Sleeplessness for two weeks or more
- Trouble focusing or enjoying normal activities
- Changes in appetite
- Feeling irritable or more or less reactive than usual
- Increased worrying or feelings of panic.

It's natural to be upset by a violent event — whether you're directly or indirectly involved. We're here for you. Confidential help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



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