

IMPACT OF MEDIA TERRORISM COVERAGE

Recently, the world is being exposed to an increase in natural disasters and terror-related events resulting in almost constant coverage on the internet, television and radio. Sometimes, it seems that we can't escape constantly hearing about and seeing graphic media coverage. These graphic images and detailed descriptions of mass killings and other tragic events can result in heightened stress – known to be a leading cause of both mental and physical illness, including depression and anxiety. So, it may be helpful to find strategies that limit its impact on our lives.

This can be especially true for children and youth. While different individuals respond to stress in different ways, prolonged exposure could negatively impact any of us. Finding ways to combat stress is important. Some find relief by:

Getting plenty of rest	Meditating
Getting good exercise	Volunteering – giving back
Connecting with positive people	Focusing on a favorite hobby

Others may have depression or anxiety and may choose to seek out professional help. These individuals might have a personal or family history of depression and/or anxiety - even physical illnesses, or they may be experiencing these symptoms for the first time. Symptoms may include:

Increased anger or irritability	Changes in mood
Increase in alcohol or drug use	Weight gain or loss
Difficulty focusing	Restlessness/irritability
Problems with sleep	Thoughts of self-harm

So, what can we do to minimize the impact on our lives?

First, it may be helpful to recognize the resiliency of humankind. We can reflect for instance on the plight of the British population in London – who experienced 57 consecutive days of relentless bombing from German air raids early in the 1099's. While *The Blitz* was designed to break British morale and the country's will to fight back, it did not. The adversity only served to strengthen their resolve to persevere and overcome. Many other historical examples of people under siege finding inner strength helps us realize that we can find our inner strength as well. Other things we can do help get through this: After 9-11, people in the United States found solidarity of purpose and support for one another – in ways never imagined by the ideology that brought about the attacks.

We can also:

- Turn off the TV and cell phone coverage, or at least limit exposure to national news. Certainly, we want to minimize exposure for youth
- Get out of the house and do something fun
- Look for ways to give back through volunteering
- Engage in healthy activities
- Connect or reconnect with family and friends, faith community
- Become a helper – As *Mr. Rogers* said:



“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.””