



Parkland, One Year Later: How to Cope with the Anniversary of a Traumatic Event

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While February 14 has traditionally served as a day to exchange love notes and candy hearts, this year it will mark a painful American tragedy: the one-year anniversary of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

Memories of that heart-wrenching day will likely evoke the “*Anniversary Effect*” – sometimes called Anniversary Reactions or Anniversary Trauma – which is a behavioral phenomenon that occurs when a person experiences psychological distress on or about the anniversary of a major negative life event. The person might suddenly display **signs of depression**, including sadness; loss of interest in routine activities or hobbies; lack of pleasure, sleep or appetite changes; and fatigue. Early detection and treatment of these symptoms is vital in lessening trauma’s devastating impact as much as possible. Noticing signs is particularly important with children experiencing anniversary reactions, as depression can manifest in different ways than it does in adults.

With my own patients, I have seen symptoms surface on the anniversary of a loved one’s death, or even on the birthday of someone who has passed. Left untreated, these feelings can intensify and impede day-to-day functioning. To help trauma survivors cope with these emotions, we must be proactive and provide support to those suffering. Swift action is particularly crucial with the Parkland tragedy, as the effects of trauma can be even more devastating for young survivors.

Step one

Ask your child if his or her school is discussing the Parkland tragedy. If so (or even if it's not), ask open-ended questions to determine mood, fears or concerns, noting anything unusual. Questions like, "How have you been feeling lately?" or "What have you and your friends been talking about?" may help encourage your child to open up. It's also important to keep in mind that just because children aren't talking about an event doesn't mean they aren't thinking about it. Don't be afraid to ask them directly if the tragedy has been on their mind. Open conversations like these can help assure your child that they can always approach you with questions or feelings, and that their emotions are normal.

Step two

At the same time, don't neglect your own fears. After Parkland, a good friend of mine expressed heightened anxiety about the safety of her three-year-old son, who was attending a nearby preschool. She even home-schooled him until she felt less afraid. As the Parkland anniversary nears, be alert to any physical or emotional distress signals and provide support as appropriate.

Step three

If either you or your child are expressing signs of acute trauma, seek the support of a healthcare professional immediately. Parents know their children well, so if you suspect your child is suffering, you're likely right. Be sure to normalize the need for help so your child doesn't feel uncomfortable or singled out. If you already have a primary care physician, request that they connect you to a qualified professional. If one isn't available, you can find information and guidance from organizations like the National Council for Behavioral Health or specialized publications such as Psychology Today. It may also be helpful to ask family or friends for trusted recommendations.

Anniversary trauma is a real crisis that cannot be dismissed as a fleeting or inconsequential issue. Like any emotional trauma, anniversary reactions often connect with subconscious fears, which can lead to even more intense anxieties if not addressed by a mental health professional. The risk of **not** seeking treatment often outweighs the risk of asking for help.

As February 14 approaches, make sure to recognize the somber feelings associated with the anniversary of the Parkland shooting—and let your loved ones know you're there to support them every day of the year.

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Contractor MAGA

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Many moons ago a family member was raped by two Men. She prayed all night and asked God not to forsake her and asked the good Lord, that the evil actions of those men, did not manifest in an unwanted pregnancy. See, this was before the morning after pill which provides guilt free sex today. Some people falsely call themselves Victims of the system because they cannot afford these pills, and demand the system provide this luxury services for free. Today exists the culture of v ...see more

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Prayers

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1d ...

my uncle was hung in a tree many years ago, my grand ma got up to parpare for church when she saw her son dead in the tree. she , her son, her family were all victims of the k,k,k, and she suffered with that for the rest of her life. little by little it went away but she suffered the rest of her life. she was a victim, lets respect victims, instead of saying that remark, telling a victim that creates more victimization.

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Nate Gomez • 3rd
Analytical Specialist at Triad Control Systems

1d ...

Well said Jorge!

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Iorraine James • 3rd
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it sort of puzzles me when a human being says 'if you take the role of a victim. 'if a human is raped they are a victim, if a human is robbed they are a victim, if a human is hit by car they are a victim etc. they will never ever get over it, is just goes away day by day and they learn to live with it. folks need to say something else beside that' if you take the role of a victim. a victim needs to know they are a victim but one day they will learn to live with it, and that's what we need to tell victims.

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Jorge Gonzalez • 3rd
Contractor MAGA

2d ...

How do you cope? You grow up and move on. Never forgetting that the mission comes first. Meaning you are alive and should be thankful to God for that and you live your life to the best of your abilities never forgetting those who gave up their lives in defense of our Freedoms. Through a life well lived is how you honor those who gave their all. If you take the role of a victim, then you will forever dishonor those who paid the ultimate price. That is how you cope.

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Tres Wuerffel • 3rd
Integrated Engineering student at Mankato State University.

3h ...

"Grow up"? People had their children murdered and you think it's a maturity problem?

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Charles Long • 3rd
Lead Software Engineer at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

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Tres Wuerffel it's an incredibly distasteful comment. I'd venture to guess many people who make these remarks have never experienced such loss themselves. (edited)

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Keith M. Mitchell • 3rd
" On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand "--

2d ...

Coping with the traumas in our lives should not be approached with an 'I can handle it attitude.'
When we are in that type zone, we always need someone to minister to us and help us not fall into a stressed and depressed state of mind!

Like Reply



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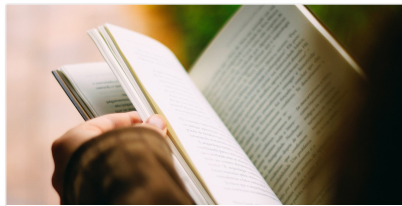
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