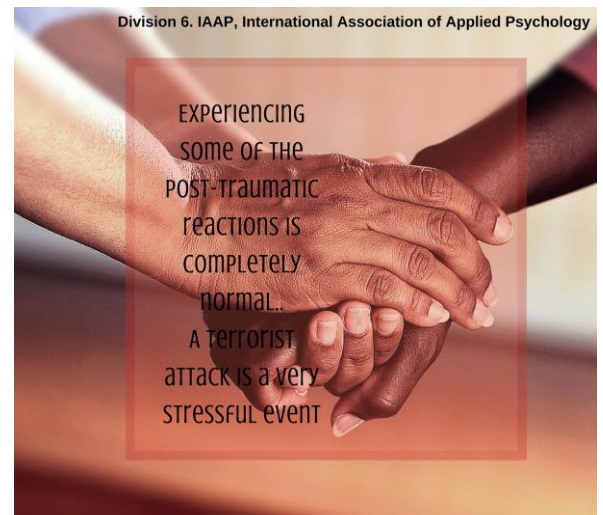


Division 6 wishes to pay a sincere tribute to the victims of terrorism *in the whole world* and to express its solidarity with their families and friends. We offer the following recommendations to those who are facing the consequences of terrorism:

Division 6 encourages victims of terrorism to remember to:

- Keep calm and remember that experiencing some of the post-traumatic reactions described here is completely normal.
- Ask for help if those reactions continue more than a few weeks or if they interfere with your daily activities.



Division 6 encourages governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions to get information about:

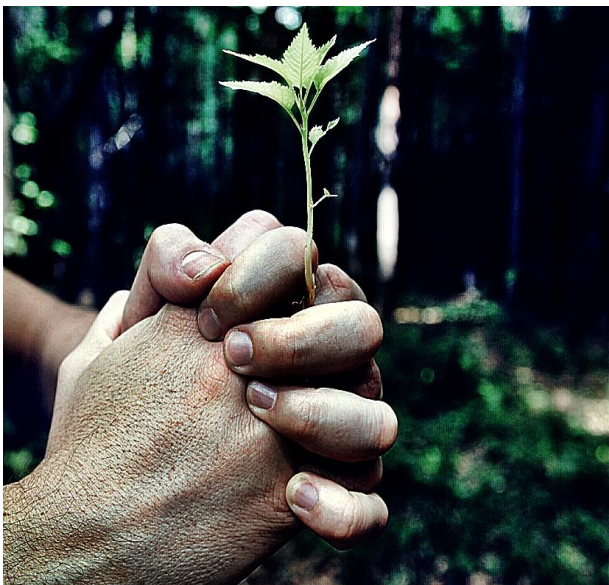
- Addressing psychological needs. Time does not cure all. After a terrorist attack, both the direct and indirect victims need psychological follow-up. These needs may be in the immediate aftermath of an event, or may emerge over time



- Treatment. Psychological treatments are available and have been shown to be effective at treating many symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression related to terrorist attacks. Psychological approaches can be provided to victims of terrorism in different ways (for example, individual therapy, group therapy, educational programs, or communications through mass media or social media).

Division 6 encourages mass or social media to:

- Media exposure. After terrorist attack there is widespread availability of graphic video or terrified photographs on TV, internet sites or social networks and this media exposure has great negative impact on victims and community.
- So mass media must be responsible with the repeatedly showing of terrified images and inform viewers of negative consequences of this repetitive exposure in order to help victims and community.



Division 6 encourage psychologist to:

Get involved in Division 6 where we are working hard for helping victims of terrorism. Please, tell us about your experience and help us to improve!!

Join us, we are waiting for you. And

remember:

¡Semper

Gumby!





www.iaapsy.org/divisions/division6

Recommendations to those who are facing the consequences of terrorism

After living through a terrorist attack, it is very common for people to experience a range of feelings and emotions, which are hard to understand and, frequently, cause discomfort. For instance, it is very common to feel high levels of anxiety for days, weeks and even months following the attack. A terrorist attack is a very stressful event in which the lives and physical safety of our-selves, our neighbors and our loved ones are completely exposed to the danger. Anxiety is the primary emotion people feel when they are immersed in a threatening situation like this one. Because of the uncertainty that follows a terrorist attack, it is logical that the feeling of danger goes on and, with it, the anxiety as well. Therefore, it is normal to have high physiological arousal, to be vigilant, to be startled by strong sounds, to be irritable and, for sure, to have sleeping difficulties (nightmares are a common element in those cases).

A terrorist attack, something illogical, cruel and completely unjust, is not an easy event for victims to manage. Until this extraordinary situation is mentally processed, people could regularly experience intrusive thoughts or images about the traumatic event, and even, sometimes could feel like they were re-living the event or that it would be happening all over again. All these reactions are completely normal and part of a “facts reconstruction” response that people go through to process the experience properly.



As the feeling of danger continues over time, it is normal for people to try to avoid, at least initially, everything which is related to the attack, including not only situations and people directly involved, but also thoughts and emotions related to it. This also creates stress. The avoidance, in this case, is a double defence mechanism. On one hand, it protects against the potential risk and on the other, it protects victims from further suffering, because it makes it easier to avoid processing the event.

Terrorist attacks are also the source of serious life crises, often associated with significant losses.

But terrorist attacks are not just a threatening situation which should be mentally processed; they are also the source of serious life crises, often associated with significant losses. These include losing a home, losing other possessions, losing part of the body or physical functioning, and even losing loved ones. All these losses require time to mourn as people adjust to their new situation and try to continue their life again.

Furthermore, after a terrorist attack, people's fundamental beliefs and values like *faith in other people*, *sense of a fair world* or even the *feeling of living in a secure environment* and the *sense of control over their lives* can become (by the way, this is exactly what terrorists want). Thus, it is normal that, after a terrorist attack, many people suffer from anxiety, sadness, rage, anger, distrust or even shame or guilt. People often experience feelings of guilt and responsibility accompanied by a wish that they could have done something to prevent the incident or its consequences because the alternative is to assume that we have no control over what happens to us or around us. It is completely normal for people to wonder about the causes and consequences of these events and their reactions to the events. This voluntary reflection is part of a process of re-adjustment that involves the most basic personal values and beliefs and that ultimately can help victims move beyond the attack and help them see the future with hope.

Thus, all those reactions, although painful, are not only common after experiencing a terrorist attack but they are entirely normal. They become extraordinary ways of reacting and overcoming extraordinary events.



The majority of the victims of terrorist attacks get over the situation by themselves naturally during the first weeks or months after the attack.

The good news is that the majority of the victims of terrorist attacks get over the situation by themselves naturally during the first weeks or months after the attack. This does not mean that they feel completely well or that they are totally free from symptomatology, but that they will return to their regular life and will do again the same activities they used to do. In this sense, increasingly there is talk of *resiliency* or *positive adaptation* that victims show after those events as a natural process of recovering.

Despite this, we know that time does not solve everything and that some people may show those symptoms chronically, causing problems which challenge victims' daily life even 20 or 30 years after the attack (García-Vera & Sanz, 2015). Among the people at greatest risk of chronic disorders are the *injured*, the *relatives of the injured or killed*, *people directly exposed to the attack and people who suffered from previous traumatic events*.

Thus, Authorities and National Health Services should monitor all the terrorism victims and, especially, the victims with a higher risk of pathology and chronicity. This monitoring must be done with an understanding that the trajectories of people vary greatly, ranging from the "normal" process of recovery that the majority of people experience to the more extreme and long-term suffering that some victims experience after a traumatic event.

In addition, public institutions have an ethical duty to ensure that the treatments provided are grounded in science and have been proven to be the most effective, such as trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy. The aim of this therapy is to address the emotions, thoughts and situations related to the attacks that usually are avoided and hinder the recovery, as well as the processing and understanding of the event. It does not mean that the attack can be forgotten or that it will not cause discomfort and pain during the victim's life. It should not be forgotten that a terrorist attack is a highly stressing event which causes pain and changes the course of a life. However, we know that victims can learn how to live and deal with their experience in ways that do not provoke continued anxiety and stress. Using these well-established treatments, victims



tend to improve. Even when 20-30 years have passed since the terrorist attack, survivors can recreate the narrative of their lives, including the terrorist attack as a key event, but recognizing that the threat belongs to the past.

Consequently, after a terrorist attack, both direct and indirect victims need psychological attention at short, medium and long term (García-Vera & Sanz, 2011, and García-Vera-Vera et al, 2014, for reviews on the psychological treatment of the psychopathological repercussions of terrorist attacks).

Other websites links that could be of interest are the followings:

- **Division 6. International Association of Applied Psychology**
<http://www.iaapsy.org/divisions/division6>
- **UNHCR'S mental health and psychosocial support for staff:**
<http://www.unhcr.org/51f67bdc9.pdf>
- **IASC Guidelines for mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings.**
Available in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Japanese](#), [Nepalese](#), [Spanish](#), and [Tajik](#)
http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/9781424334445/en/
- **Managing traumatic stress: coping with terrorism:**
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/terrorism.aspx>
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network.** Terrorism resources for helping children.
<http://www.nctsnet.org/trauma-types/terrorism>
- **Manual de la OVC para Ayudarle a Superar el Impacto Emocional de Actos Terroristas.**
http://www.ovc.gov/publications/infores/cat_hndbk_spanish/welcome.html
- **Guías de ayuda psicológica para víctimas de catástrofes, desastres y atentados terroristas:** <https://www.ucm.es/estres/ayuda-victimas>; <http://www.ucm.es/estres/victimas>

Some people may show those symptoms chronically, causing problems which challenge victims' daily life. And they need psychological attention at short, medium and long term.

