RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY TRAUMA

What You May Experience
After a difficult or shocking event, people react in a wide variety of ways. You may not respond the same way that others do, but below are some common responses to traumatic events:

- Increased anxiety
- Low mood
- Irritability and anger
- Experiencing distressing memories, flashbacks, or dreams
- Feeling “jumpy,” or on “high alert”
- Avoiding things that remind you of the traumatic event
- Lapses in memory
- Trouble talking about the event
- Finding it hard to focus on other things

How to Support Yourself Right Now
It is very normal to experience the symptoms above, or others not listed. If you’re experiencing great distress at a memory of the event (e.g., a panic attack or flashback), try a grounding technique. This is anything that will “ground” you to your physical body or environment. Grounding may include:

- Splashing cold water on your face
- Using deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or other calming techniques
  - https://wellbeing.uw.edu/mental-health/mental-health-resources/ for relaxation videos and podcasts
- Activating all five senses with the 5-4-3-2-1 technique:
  - Name 5 things you can see in the room with you
  - Name 4 things you can feel (“chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
  - Name 3 things you can hear right now
  - Name 2 things you can smell right now
  - Name 1 good thing about yourself

How to Support Yourself Going Forward
It’s hard to put an exact timeline on the healing process, but here are some things that can help with emotion regulation:

- Notice when you’re struggling to take a break
- Try to build up a toolbox of self-care strategies like:
  - Taking a walk, or other physical activity
  - Talking to a friend
  - Meditation, mindfulness, or other calming techniques
  - Doing a relaxing hobby or activity
  - Listening to music
  - Watching a favorite show or movie
  - Reading a good book
- Finding friends, family, and supportive others with whom you can talk about the event when you want—but also keep in mind that you can let people know if and when you don’t want to talk about the event anymore
- Use mental health apps, like Headspace and Calm, to help you get through tough moments or to help with sleep when you need

How to Know if You Need More Help
If the symptoms you’re experiencing persist for a long time, or are so severe that you can’t attend class or any of your usual activities, it may be time to get some professional help. That could include ongoing medical attention, counseling, and referrals to community provider.

My SSP: If you are having a hard time or need crisis support, MySSP is available 24/7 to chat. You can reach them at 1.866.775.0608.