

Taking care of ourselves in response to social injustice



Tragedies involving social injustice can have a dramatic impact on people whose community or identity group were affected. For these individuals, it's especially important to tune into how you're feeling and how you're coping, in order to ensure that you're protecting your mental and physical well-being during an especially difficult time.

Honor your emotions. Your emotional response is like a fingerprint-- it shares similarities with others but it's uniquely yours. Some people may experience more anger or frustration. Others may feel more sadness or grief. And for many, there will be a combination of emotions or even a sense of numbness. No matter what your feelings look like, know that those feelings are valid.

Respond to yourself with kindness. Emotions aren't good, bad, right, or wrong. How we feel is simply our natural, instinctive response to what's happening around us and within us. Try not to compare how you feel to how someone else feels or how you think you should feel. Instead, notice your emotions with curiosity and attention, and then respond with kindness and compassion for yourself.

Give yourself permission to prioritize self-care. Too often, we neglect self-care because we want to serve others or advance worthy causes first. Remember that self-care amidst the response to social injustice promotes healing, which puts you in a stronger position to take sustainable action toward advocacy and service to others.

Respond to your needs through self-care. Ask yourself "What do I need for my physical and mental wellness right now?" Right now it's reasonable to expect that getting through your day may be harder than usual, so it's important to nurture your mind and your body by investing in self-care fundamentals:

- **Build recurring breaks into each day**
- **Schedule restorative activities**
- **Maintain physical activity**
- **Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night**
- **Eat nutritious meals at regular intervals**
- **Make time for your faith practices or spirituality**

Connect with others for support. Consider reaching out to people in your support system whom you can trust to listen openly and intently. You may also consider reaching out more broadly to connect with people with shared experiences who can offer a deeper understanding of what you and your community are facing. When reaching out, be upfront about how others can best help you. Let them know if you're wanting a listening ear, guidance or perspective, or more tangible things like assistance with work or home obligations during this challenging time, to better ensure that you get your needs met.

Weigh the costs of consuming media. The desire to stay informed of current events is understandable, but increased media consumption can mean greater exposure to distressing images and disturbing stories. Check in on whether viewing social media or following the news may be causing you more distress. If so, try limiting the frequency or amount of time you spend on media sources to allow yourself more time for activities that offer greater benefit, like connecting with loved ones or engaging in activities that promote a sense of meaning and purpose.

Remember that mental health support is available. If you notice that your emotions are overwhelming you and limiting your ability to function at home, at work, or in your relationships, reach out for mental health support through your health plan or EAP.