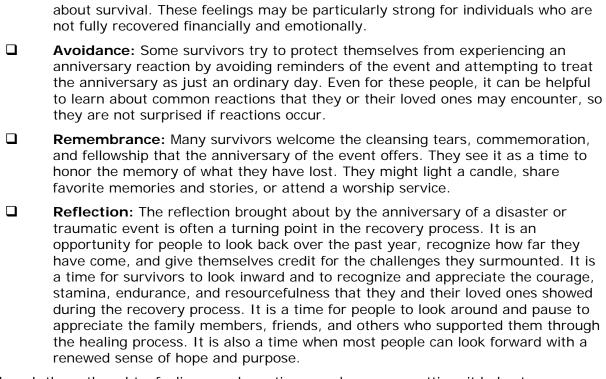
## Anniversary Reactions to a Traumatic Event: The Recovery Process Continues

As the anniversary of a disaster or traumatic event approaches, many survivors report a return of restlessness and fear. Psychological literature calls it the anniversary reaction and defines it as an individual's response to unresolved grief resulting from significant losses. The anniversary reaction can involve several days or even weeks of anxiety, anger, nightmares, flashbacks, depression, or fear.

On a more positive note, the anniversary of a disaster or traumatic event also can provide an opportunity for emotional healing. Individuals can make significant progress in working through the natural grieving process by recognizing, acknowledging, and paying attention to the feelings and issues that surface during their anniversary reaction. These feelings and issues can help individuals develop perspective on the event and figure out where it fits in their hearts, minds, and lives.

It is important to note that not all survivors of a disaster or traumatic event experience an anniversary reaction. Those who do, however, may be troubled because they did not expect and do not understand their reaction. For these individuals, knowing what to expect in advance may be helpful. Common anniversary reactions among survivors of a disaster or traumatic event include:

Memories, Dreams, Thoughts, and Feelings: Individuals may replay memories, thoughts, and feelings about the event, which they can't turn off. They may see repeated images and scenes associated with the trauma or relive the event over and over. They may have recurring dreams or nightmares. These reactions may be as vivid on the anniversary as they were at the actual time of the disaster or traumatic event. Grief and Sadness: Individuals may experience grief and sadness related to the loss of income, employment, a home, or a loved one. Even people who have moved to new homes often feel a sense of loss on the anniversary. Those who were forced to relocate to another community may experience intense homesickness for their old neighborhoods. Fear and Anxiety: Fear and anxiety may resurface around the time of the anniversary, leading to jumpiness, startled responses, and vigilance about safety. These feelings may be particularly strong for individuals who are still working through the grieving process. Frustration, Anger, and Guilt: The anniversary may reawaken frustration and anger about the disaster or traumatic event. Survivors may be reminded of the possessions, homes, or loved ones they lost; the time taken away from their lives; the frustrations with bureaucratic aspects of the recovery process; and the slow process of rebuilding and healing. Individuals may also experience guilt



Although these thoughts, feelings, and reactions can be very upsetting, it helps to understand that it is normal to have strong reactions to a disaster or traumatic event and its devastation many months later. Recovery from a disaster or traumatic event takes time, and it requires rebuilding on many levels - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. However, with patience, understanding, and support from family members and friends, you can emerge from a disaster or traumatic event stronger than before.

If you are still having trouble coping, ask for help. Consult a counselor or mental health professional. In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from your human resources department or your company's Employee Assistance Program.

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