



# EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE

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## Important Note on Emotional Wellbeing

This guide is intended to offer general support and guidance. If you or someone you know shows ongoing signs of distress such as persistent anxiety, changes in behaviour, sleep difficulties, withdrawal, or intense fear it is important to seek support from a qualified mental health professional, such as a psychologist, counsellor, or GP.

Seeking help is a sign of strength and care, and early support can make a meaningful difference.

Key messages to strengthen the community in the first days/weeks following traumatic events to reduce distress, and encourage people to ask for help when needed.

## GENERAL MESSAGES

Following a traumatic event, initially you may feel fear, anger, confusion, being “on alert,” experience sleep problems, intrusive thoughts, sadness, being extra sensitive, or trouble focusing.

**What you feel now is a normal reaction to an abnormal event.**

Not every traumatic event becomes PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Most people will feel stress at first, but those feelings usually subside with time and may go away without formal treatment.

Usually there is a natural recovery. As a community, our job is to support this natural process and to notice early who needs extra help.



## CREATE A FEELING OF SAFETY

- When discussing the events with family and friends, say clearly what is known and what is not known, using short facts, and avoid rumours.
- Share any updates about community safety steps (security/police presence, entrance rules, organised community events).
- Be careful on social media: do not share identifying details about victims or locations, and do not spread unconfirmed information.

## HOW TO LOWER STRESS

- Short calming actions: slow breathing, grounding (5-4-3-2-1), gentle movement, a warm shower, calming music.
- Reduce repeated exposure to difficult content (videos/photos/news): take news in "small doses," and avoid watching before sleep.
- Maintain basic routines: sleep, food, drinking water, physical activity, and regular schedules.
- Calming thoughts: recognise that the body and mind are in 'emergency mode.' This is expected, and will slowly improve with small and steady steps.

## SUPPORT PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY STRENGTH (SELF & COMMUNITY EFFICACY)

- Do "small tasks" that give a sense of control: check on neighbours/friends/family.
- Be aware of what the community is already doing to offer support.
- Strength message: "We can cope-both as individuals and as a community-through practical and organised steps."





## SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTION (CONNECTEDNESS)

- Human connection is a key source of strength—belonging reduces loneliness and increases hope.
- Encourage reaching out: “Do not stay alone with this.”
- When talking to friends and family, be present, show empathy, ask short questions, and do not push someone to “say everything.”

## BUILD HOPE

- Separate real pain from hopelessness: “It is OK to be afraid and to hurt—and it can still get better.”
- If you feel that you or a friend need help, recognise that asking for help is a responsible step, not a “failure.”

## WHEN TO CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL HELP

- If there is ongoing worsening or a major drop in functioning (sleep, work/study, parenting) after the first weeks.
- If there are severe and repeated panic/anxiety attacks, extreme avoidance, increasing alcohol/drug use, or deep withdrawal from people.
- In any situation of self-harm risk or suicidal thoughts—contact emergency services immediately.

## IF YOU NEED SUPPORT SERVICES AND HELPLINES:

**VIC:**  **JewishCare**  
Enriching Lives  
**03 8517 5999**

**NSW:**  **JewishCare**  
You're in good hands  
**1300 133 660**