NAVIGATING THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE

SAFETY PLAN

Every response and reaction to violence is valid. Gun violence in particular can activate many different responses and bring up past experiences. Regardless of where you were when the act of violence occurred, the impact is felt by everyone in the community. Processing and healing takes time. Immediately after an event, it can be hard to orient oneself. This guide provides options to help ground yourself and your loved ones. If the options don't feel right, trust yourself and try something else.

In the Days After

- ☐ **Take a break from Social Media and the News** - this can be so difficult when all we want is answers. But, it often can create even more stress for ourselves. While cutting out social media/news completely may be unrealistic, try scheduling time away from it. For example, try scheduling 30 minutes of screen time, then 30 minutes off.
- ☐ **Connect with community and loved ones** - community is incredibly important in healing. Being surrounded by those who care for you can help you feel safer, can help ensure your needs are taken care of, and can help the community rebuild. Looking for vigils (virtual can be especially helpful if you are anxious to leave your home), support groups or just reaching out to loved ones and asking them to be there with you.
- ☐ **Try to avoid critiquing your reactions** - it is natural to question how you are feeling and how you should feel. Everyone is different and all of your reactions are normal and valid. When you start to critique yourself, try visualizing a stop sign and instead repeat this affirmation "I am allowed to show up just as I am. My feelings are valid."
- ☐ **Try utilizing affirmations to avoid spiraling** - "what-ifs" can send us down a spiral quickly and can ultimately hurt our healing process. It may be helpful to write out affirmations that you can repeat when the what-ifs arise. For example:
  - ☐ "I did what I could to keep myself safe and that is valid."
  - ☐ "I am here and I am safe."
  - ☐ "I cannot control the past."
- ☐ **Engage in Self-Soothing Activities** - self-soothing is a way to provide immediate satisfaction and helps us feel safe and comforted for the short-term. While we want to eventually engage in self-care practices, sometimes we need to self-soothe first. Try engaging your different senses to help being the regulation of your nervous system. Some examples may be:
  - ☐ Eating comfort foods
  - ☐ Drinking warm and comforting beverages
  - ☐ Binge watching a comfort show or movie
  - ☐ Wrapping yourself up in your favorite blanket
  - ☐ Using your favorite scents with a diffuser, candle or lotion
  - ☐ Asking for a hug or embrace from a loved one
  - ☐ Taking a long, hot shower (even if you just sit and let the water run)

In the Weeks After

- [ ] **Find ongoing support** - even if it feels like the world has moved on, the trauma is still there. Healing is not restricted by time and neither is pain. It can be helpful to identify ways to continue processing your feelings and experiences. Some examples may be accessing counseling, attending support groups, or scheduling regular check-ins with loved ones who can hold space.
- [ ] **Externally Processing Emotions** - taking your experience and feelings and letting them out can be cathartic. Even if talking to others may feel overwhelming, it can be helpful to process your feelings by journaling, recording voice notes or videos, or writing poetry, songs or other creative outlets. The goal of this is not to be productive, this processing is just for you. Some journal prompts that you can start with may be:
    - [ ] How is this trauma showing up in your body? Your mind?
    - [ ] What fears are repeating in your head?
    - [ ] How did this experience impact my life? How did it impact my thoughts, my relationships, my sleeping, my day-to-day?
    - [ ] What makes you feel safe? Describe what safety feels like, looks like, smells like, sounds like, etc.
    - [ ] What does healing look like to me? What do I need for my healing journey?
    - [ ] What are my needs? What do I need on a weekly basis to feel safe and supported by myself and others? On a daily basis?
- [ ] **Engage in Action** - feeling helpless in these times is a common and valid experience. For some, taking action in some way helps us feel more in control of ourselves. Here are some examples of engaging in action to get you started:
    - [ ] Identify your community needs, are there fundraisers that you can support? Meal trains that you can start for those who lost loved ones?
    - [ ] What skills do you have that you can share with your community? Do you make things? Can you cook or bake? Can you provide counseling? Or transportation? We all have skills that we can share with our community. Even if it's not directly related to the violence that occurred, supporting the community is action.
    - [ ] Identify ways to get involved on a political level. See what your local officials are doing (or not doing) about preventing gun violence. Sign petitions, attend town halls, contact officials regularly to demand action.
    - [ ] Organize ways to honor the memories of those who were lost. And ways to support those impacted on an ongoing basis.
- [ ] **Identify and Engage in Self-Care Practices** - self-care is a practice that we engage in to address our needs on an ongoing basis. Self-care requires us to identify what our needs are and implement strategies to meet those needs. Everyone is different and so are their needs so the first step is thinking about what those are for you. To start trying using this Self-Care Assessment. From there, try creating a self-care plan, including what you need on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. You can try this template to start, Self-Care Maintenance Plan.
    - [ ] Self-Care Assessment
    - [ ] Self-Care Maintenance Plan
- [ ] **Identify and Build Community** - self-care is important but healing does not happen in a vacuum. We need community to heal. Take some time to identify who is already apart of your community, loved ones, neighbors, peers, classmates, coworkers, etc. Then identify ways to build connections or strengthen connections. Some ideas to build community:
    - [ ] Find community organizations or clubs (there are a ton of options at BYU for students, check out BYU Student Organizations to start but here are some options beyond just BYU):

- [ ] Volunteer work
- [ ] Student clubs/orgs
- [ ] Local libraries (often host free events)
- [ ] Recreational sports
- [ ] Cultural and Arts Events
- [ ] Community Gardens

- [ ] Join a political or activist group (look into values and movements that you align with an go from there!)
- [ ] Join a mutual aid group (think about community needs you feel passionately about supporting and go from there!)
- [ ] Host your own community events. Some examples:
    - [ ] Potluck dinners
    - [ ] Game nights
    - [ ] Themed movie nights
    - [ ] Outdoor picnics
    - [ ] Book Club
    - [ ] Crafting or DIY workshops
    - [ ] Community Clean-Up
    - [ ] Hiking or Nature Walks
    - [ ] Cooking Classes