

Behavioral Health is Essential To Health



Prevention Works



Treatment is Effective



People Recover



Disaster Anniversaries

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Purpose

- To provide insight into the potential effects of disaster anniversaries on survivors and provide ways for communities to build resilience.

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

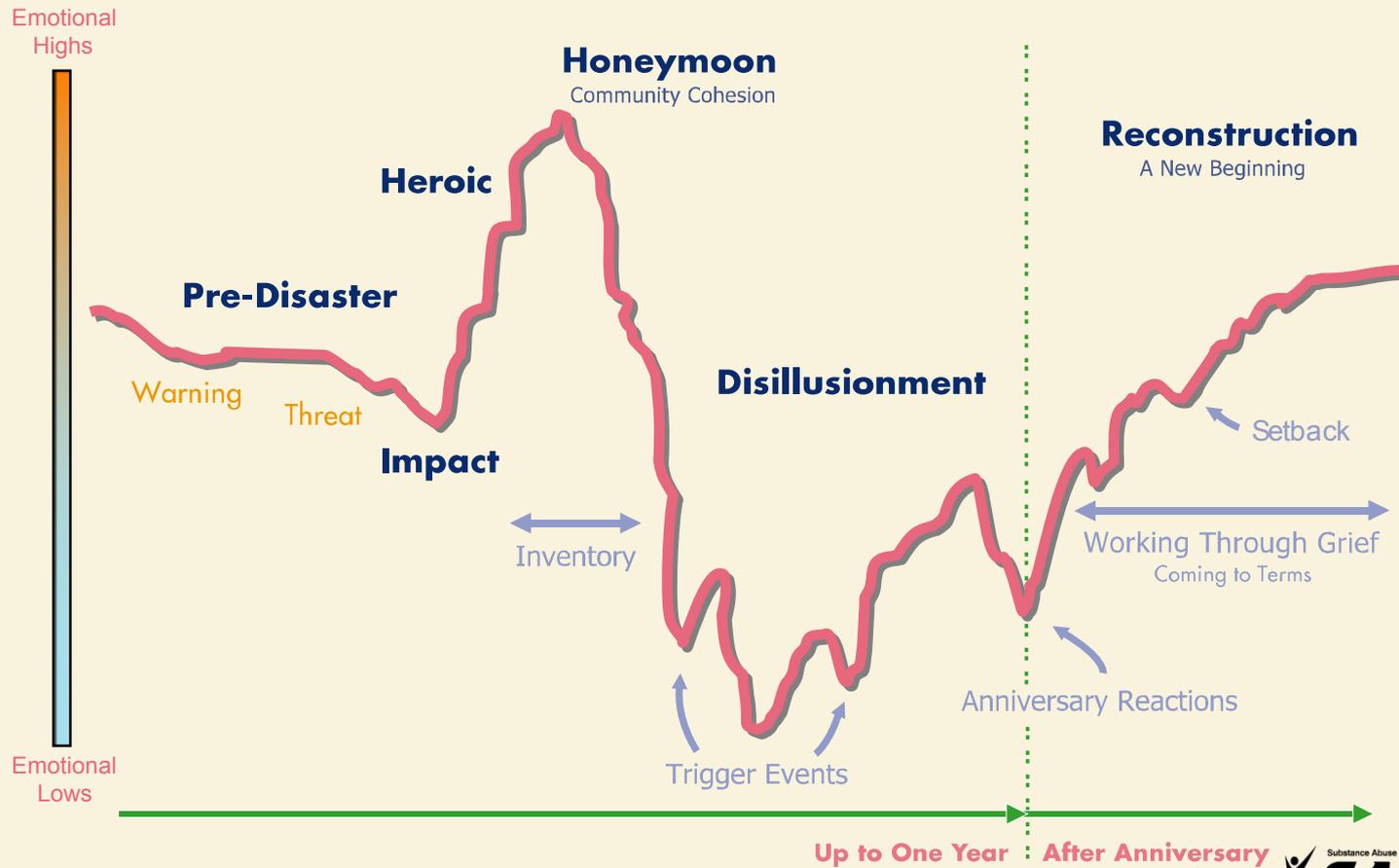
1. Recognize the importance of disaster anniversaries.
2. Identify common disaster anniversary behavioral health reactions and how they relate to the timeline/phases of typical disasters.
3. Describe the importance of cultural competency during disaster anniversaries.
4. Recognize how community remembrance events can help promote recovery and resilience.



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Phases of Disaster



Why Are Anniversaries Important?

Disaster anniversaries are a time to:

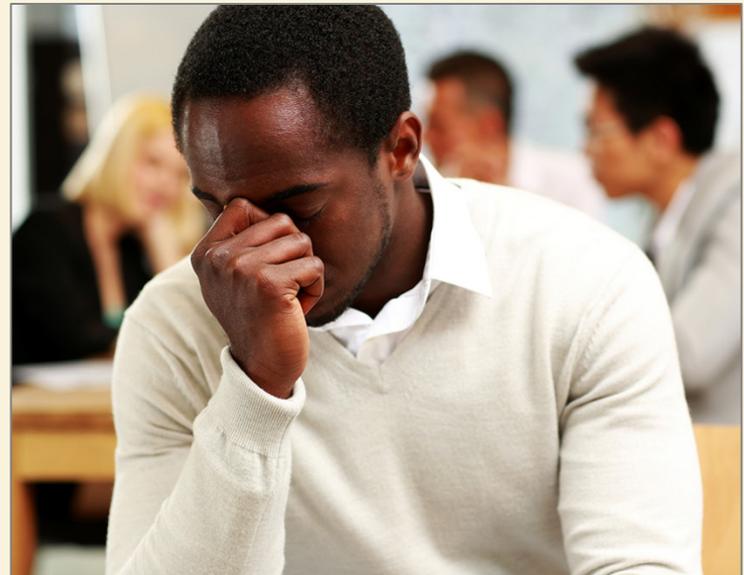
- Acknowledge, normalize, and respond to painful memories and triggers.
- Recognize and remember losses associated with the disaster.
- Stop and assess accomplishments.
- Recognize stakeholders who support the recovery process.
- Promote resilience and healing.

Anniversary Reactions

- The anniversary of a disaster 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 emotions and issues that surface during their anniversary reaction.
- These emotions and issues can help individuals develop perspective on the event and figure out where it fits in their hearts, minds, and lives.

Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- As the anniversary of a disaster or traumatic event approaches, many survivors report a return of restlessness and fear.
- The anniversary reaction can involve several days or even weeks of anxiety, anger, nightmares, flashbacks, or depression.



Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Psychological literature defines the anniversary reaction as an individual's response to unresolved grief resulting from significant losses.
- It is important to note that not all survivors of a disaster or traumatic event experience an anniversary reaction.

Common Anniversary Reactions

- Memories, dreams, thoughts, and emotions
- Grief and sadness
- Frustration, anger, and guilt
- Avoidance
- Remembrance
- Reflection



Common Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Although these thoughts, feelings, and reactions can be very upsetting, it helps to understand that it is common to have strong reactions to a disaster and its devastation many months or even years later.
- Recovery from a disaster takes time, and it requires rebuilding on many levels—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Emotional Triggers

- As the anniversary approaches there can be an increase in the distressing reactions of some survivors. These distressing reactions are often triggered by:
 - Media accounts of the anniversary
 - Seasonal changes that are reminders of a natural disaster
 - Personal events, such as birthdays, that correspond with the anniversary
 - Personal losses associated with the disaster, including loved ones, pets, and property

Emotional Triggers (cont.)

- May increase in frequency around the time of the disaster anniversary.
- Are unique to each person.
- Can occur unexpectedly and may ebb and flow.
- May not be easily recognized.
- Tend to happen more often when stress is present.
- May result in setbacks in reconstruction.

Navigating Anniversary Reactions

- Talk about it.
- Take care of yourself.
- Engage in healthy activities.
- Keep your routines.

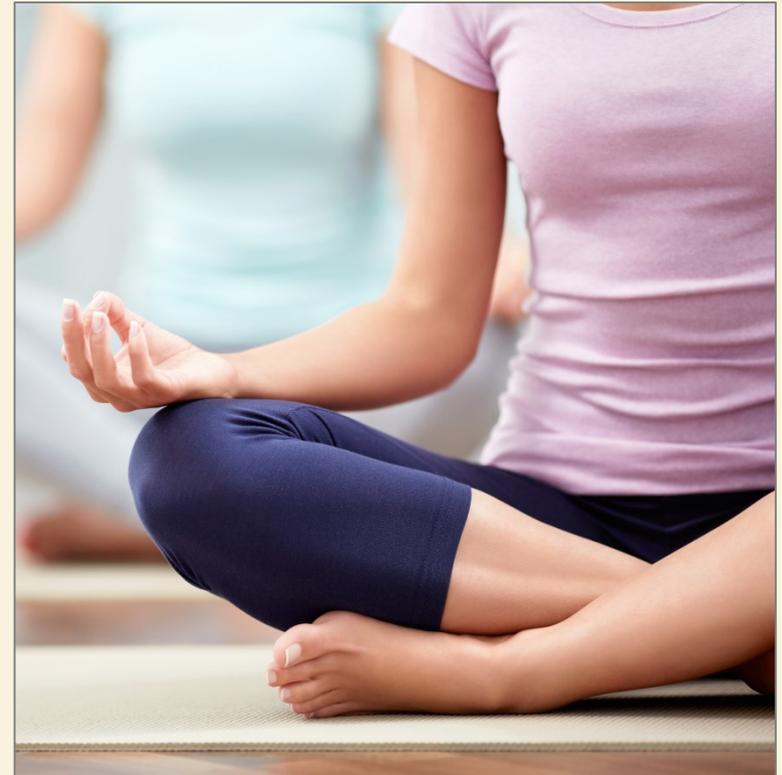


Navigating Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Limit media viewing.
- Don't compare yourself to others.
- Stay involved.
- Use coping strategies that have worked in the past.

Navigating Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Be gentle with yourself.
- Seek comforting activities.
- Give yourself permission to be where you are.
- Draw upon your faith/spirituality.



Navigating Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Accept kindness.
- Help others.
- Plan personal activities.
- Don't be afraid to seek professional help.



Helping Children and Youth Cope With Anniversary Reactions

- Help children recognize and cope with disaster reminders.
- Allow children to experience the anniversary in their own way.
- Be honest with children about adult reactions and concerns.
- Limit media exposure.



Helping Children and Youth Cope With Anniversary Reactions (cont.)

- Provide opportunities for children to make positive differences in their lives and communities.
- Discuss concerns with teachers and other support professionals.



Tips for Parents

- Model calm behaviors.
- Maintain routines.
- Limit media exposure.
- Repeat instructions often.
- Provide support at bedtime.
- Connect with other families and children.
- Point out new growth.

Planning Anniversary Events

- Know the community.
- Let the community take the lead.
- Support community leaders and groups desiring to organize events.
- Assist local organizations responsible for planning events.

Planning Anniversary Events (cont.)

- Involve survivors in planning efforts.
- Limit exposure to potentially sensitive material.
- Provide for quiet, private spaces where individuals can debrief as needed.

Incorporating Cultural Competence

- Recognize the importance of culture, and respect diversity.
- Recognize the role of help-seeking, customs, traditions, and support networks.
- Communicate with cultural brokers, especially in relation to anniversary reactions and rituals.
- Ensure that events are accessible, appropriate, and equitable.



Cultural Competency Includes:

- Recognizing the importance of culture, and respecting diversity.
- Recognizing the role of help-seeking, customs, traditions, and support networks.
- Communicating with cultural brokers, especially in relation to anniversary reactions and rituals.
- Ensuring that services are accessible, appropriate, and equitable.
- Involving faith-based communities.
- Recognizing that there are cultures within cultures.

Key Anniversary Relationships

- Dialogue with media regarding the coverage of sensitive material.
- Work with media to provide information regarding positive coping skills, stress management, and access to behavioral health services.
- Encourage the media to run stories that portray the experience of triggers and grief as common, natural experiences and emphasize the healing aspects of anniversaries.



Key Anniversary Relationships (cont.)

- Involve survivors, schools, community agencies, and the faith-based community in planning efforts.
- Make sure that behavioral health providers are aware that there could be an influx in service demands during the anniversary period and in the months that follow.



Anniversaries Promote Resilience and Healing by:

- Following and during the anniversary, the community will continue to work through grief and come to terms with disaster losses ideally by developing constructive coping strategies and building a new post-disaster life. This process can often take years.
- Recognizing responses to triggers and grief as natural and common
- Validating loss
- Acknowledging success and accomplishment
- Recognizing stakeholders and their contributions
- Partnering with media, cultural brokers, community agencies, schools, and behavioral health providers to provide positive coping skills information and access to needed services across the lifespan

Anniversaries Promote Resilience and Healing by:

Helping communities and individuals appreciate that with patience, time, understanding, and support from family members and friends, survivors and communities can emerge from a disaster stronger than before.

In Summary

Anniversaries are important to:

- Acknowledge and respond to painful memories and triggers that are natural and common.
- Recognize and remember losses associated with the disaster.
- Stop and assess accomplishments.
- Recognize stakeholders who support the recovery process.
- Promote resilience and healing.

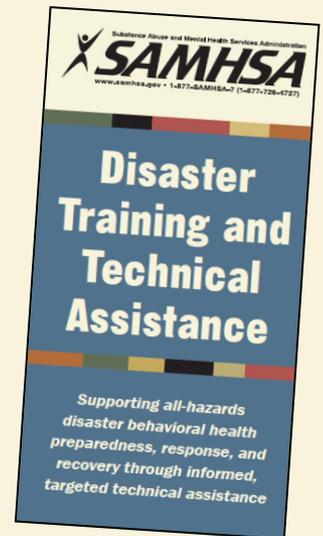
About SAMHSA DTAC

SAMHSA DTAC supports SAMHSA's efforts to prepare states, territories, and tribes to deliver an effective behavioral health response to disasters.

SAMHSA DTAC, toll-free: 1-800-308-3515

<http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov



DBHIS Installments

- Substance Use Disorders and Disasters
- Disaster Specific
- Disaster Responders
- Older Adults
- Resilience and Stress Management
- Visit

<http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/dbhis-collections>

The screenshot displays the SAMHSA website interface. At the top, the SAMHSA logo is prominent, with the text "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration" above it. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the logo, a navigation menu includes "Find Help", "Topics", "Programs & Campaigns", "Grants", "Data", "Priorities", "About Us", and "Publications". The main content area is titled "Programs & Campaigns » DTAC » DBHIS Collections". On the left, a sidebar menu lists "DTAC", "About DTAC", "CCP", "Resources", "DBHIS Collections", "Education and Training", and "Webinars and Podcasts". The central content features a large banner with the text "PREPARE RESPOND RECOVER" and an image of a dog in a disaster zone. Below the banner, the heading "Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS) Resource Collections" is displayed. A paragraph of text describes the DTAC's role in providing resources for disaster behavioral health. A list of links follows, including "Acute Interventions", "Animals and Disasters", "Children and Youth", "Disaster Responders", "Disaster Response Template Toolkit", "Disaster-Specific Resources", "Faith-Based Communities and Spiritual Leaders", and "Immediate Disaster Response". A note states: "Note: This item replaces the 'Public Safety Workers DBHIS'". On the right side, there is a "SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin" section with a subscription form and a "Click to subscribe" button.

Resources

- SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health App
- The Disaster Distress Helpline: Toll-free 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746
- National Center for PTSD
 - General information on PTSD
 - Access to the Published International Literature On Traumatic Stress (PILOTS) database: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>



Questions and Contact Information

If you have questions, contact:

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We value your feedback:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/webinars-podcasts/disaster-anniversaries-feedback>

Thank you

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