



Caring for Yourself While Experiencing Identity-Based Stress

When a harmful event occurs that targets you or your loved ones, it's normal to feel waves of mixed emotions—like shock, anger, fear, sadness, or disillusionment. Whether you experience the event directly, learn that it affected a loved one, or see it unfolding on the news, the disruption to your sense of safety can be unsettling.

It's understandable to struggle when you see members of your community experiencing harm. Although distressing events are usually outside of our control, there are tools we can use to care for ourselves along the way.

Notice and accept how you're feeling

You can't care for emotions you aren't paying attention to. Check in with yourself, scan your body, and reflect on your emotional and physical state. Notice what feelings are coming up for you and what parts of your body are holding stress (e.g., tight shoulders, a lump in your throat, achy muscles).

Connect with familiar, comforting people and places

It's OK to feel more drawn to spaces and people that feel safe right now. If you can't make those connections in person, consider organizing virtual hangouts with people who share your identity or understand what you're experiencing.

Set boundaries

Remember that you have the right to choose what you discuss and who you confide in—at all times, but especially with tough topics. Give yourself permission to step away from conversations and people that aren't serving you right now. This includes freeing yourself from the burden of educating those around you if you don't want to.

Recognize when it may feel like "too much"

You're only human, and it's OK to need more time to sit with tough, exhausting feelings. You might not be operating at your usual levels of productivity, or you might have difficulty concentrating. Remember to be kind to yourself—you're having an understandable response to a terrible, unexpected situation.