

ANGER

It is normal to be angry when terrible or painful things happen.

When we hold anger in, it builds and we may overreact or explode.

Holding anger inside can also create headaches or stomachaches.

We need safe places to let our anger out.

Feeling angry is a signal that something is wrong.

Having anger is not the problem.

What we do with the anger is what matters.



"Sometimes I can't hear
anything around me.
All I can feel is my anger."

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **Notice anger warning signs**, such as a warm face, clenched fists, or quick movements and calm yourself down before it escalates.
2. **Count down from 100**. Every 10 numbers, take a deep breath.
3. **Picture a stop sign** to quickly lead you to calm down, control your actions and walk away.
4. **Physical activity** can provide an outlet for your emotions.
5. **Take a break and move away**. Do anything that relaxes you.
6. **Stop talking to avoid saying** angry, hurtful words that you will want to take back later. Calm yourself.
7. **Do something with your hands**: Fix something, cook, style your hair, draw, anything.
8. **Take 5 deep, slow breaths** and say a calming word, or talk to a friend.



NIGHTMARES

Nightmares are caused by:
Remembering difficult events in our life as well
as anxious or fearful thoughts or feelings.

You have nightmares because something from
your past or present is very painful and you
may be trying to understand it or avoid thinking
about it , so, it comes out in your nightmares.

Nightmares
have
messages for
you if you
take the time
to understand
them.

Nightmares tell you what you are thinking about.

WHAT TO DO?

1. **Notice the emotions** you feel in your nightmare. Ask yourself, "*What in my everyday life is similar to how I feel in the nightmare?*" And "*What might be the central message of this nightmare?*"
2. **Express your emotions.** You will sleep better, if you have less pain inside of you.
3. **Create a bedtime ritual** with activities that calm the body and mind, like a bath, reading a book, listening to relaxing music, herbal tea, stretching, and touching objects or pets.
4. **Write a list of 'things that make you feel safe,'** such as a protection prayer, or visualizing a safe place or memory.
5. **How do you fall back asleep after your nightmare?** Do things that are soothing, like turning on a light or saying a prayer or deep breathing.
6. **Keep a symbol of safety** underneath your pillow, such as a picture, a necklace, or a prayer.



ANXIETY AND HYPERVIGILANCE

Anxiety and hypervigilance are common emotions after trauma. They look like:

1. Persistent feelings of dread & worry.
2. The feeling of always waiting for the next bad thing to happen.
3. Being extremely sensitive to your surroundings.

Hypervigilance and anxiety can disrupt all parts of your life, such as causing problems with sleeping and eating and how you relate to others. They can also make you feel sick with headaches or nausea.

Anxiety is the bodies way of saying,
"I was not ready last time, but next time, I will be ready."

WHAT TO DO?

1. **Accept the uncertain nature of life.** Life is full of unknowns, and trying to have absolute certainty & control can create anxiety and can be exhausting.
2. There is no absolute safety, but you can **create a list of the parts of your life where you feel safe.** For example, your bed, your dog, the shopkeeper at the corner, a certain song or when you pray at night.
3. Make an **anxiety trigger list.** Triggers can come from inside of you: memories, thoughts, feelings or from outside of you: specific people, places, or sounds that make you anxious.
4. **Start and end your day with relaxation exercises.**



SADNESS

Do you feel sad?

We all feel sad sometimes.

Sadness is a normal part of life. Sometimes it is brief, other times, it lasts a while. Persistent sadness can affect your ability to function in different parts of your life.

Sadness can feel like being in the dark and being unable to find a light switch.



Everyone expresses their sadness in different ways. Some people cry, others become quiet and isolate themselves, and other people avoid talking about anything sad or difficult.

WHAT HELPS WHEN YOU ARE FEELING SAD?

1. **It is okay to cry.** Tears release something you do not have words for.
2. **Sadness (and all emotions) are messengers.** What message does your sadness have for you?
3. **Identify your sadness triggers.** Make a list. What people, places, conversations, memories make you sad?
4. **Talk about about whatever is making you sad.** When we talk about our negative emotions with a safe person, we feel better.
5. **Identify times when you are not sad.** What is happening during those times? Who is around you? What are you doing? Do more of those things that bring you joy.
6. **Release your sadness** through prayer, talking to loved ones, drawing, crying, and exercise.
7. **Move your body.** Do activities even if you do not feel like it. We often feel better after we move.



NEGATIVE THINKING

When bad things happen in our lives, it's normal to have negative thoughts – like expecting the worst, or seeing the worst in people or situations.

Negative thoughts are powerful and always having negative thoughts can make you feel bad, weigh you down and it can stress your body.

An example of negative thinking is saying over and over again:
"The world is not safe. I am not safe. I am not safe. Something bad is going to happen to me."

Our negative thoughts can hold us back from positive action.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **Release your negative thoughts** by talking to a friend, praying, or writing them down.
2. **Keep track of your negative thoughts.** For one day, every time you have a negative thought, pick up a small rock and put it in your pocket (or draw a line in a notebook). Notice how many rocks (or lines) you collect.
3. **Label your negative thought.** Create some distance between you and the thought by naming the thought you are having.
4. **When you get stuck in negative thinking. Ask yourself these questions:** Is there any other way of looking at this situation? Is there any other explanation? How would a loved one think about the situation? What would I tell a friend who had the same thought? Am I thinking in extremes?
5. **Interrupt the negative thinking** by focusing on the world around you by moving your body, doing something that makes you smile or doing anything else that gets you out of your head.



SOMATIC SYMPTOMS

Somatic symptoms happen when instead of feeling sadness or anger or fear, your body reacts and you experience a headache or dizziness.

Somatic symptoms are very common in places where people live everyday with much uncertainty and violence.

Somatic symptoms hurt, however, they have no medical reason. They are caused by having psychosocial problems.

Some common somatic symptoms are:

- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Nausea
- Fainting

Somatic symptoms tell you that you are carrying emotional pain.

Somatic symptoms are a way that the body talks to us.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **If you are feeling pain, talk to a health care provider.** Make sure nothing is medically wrong.
2. **Do relaxation exercises** to decrease symptoms.
3. Your strong emotions are being expressed through your body. So **express your feelings.** Face the things you are avoiding and your symptoms will get better.
4. **Stretch. Move your body. Regular exercise helps!**
5. **Create safety.** The safer you feel, the less somatic symptoms you will have.
6. Notice **when the somatic symptoms appear.** Try to notice any common people, places or things that appear during the times the symptoms were present.



SLEEPING PROBLEMS

Sleeping problems signal that you are experiencing distress.

Many people living in places of insecurity and conflict have sleeping problems due to:

1. Anxiety and other distressing emotions and thoughts
2. Unhealthy evening routines
3. Diet and lifestyle
4. Stressful or unsafe living situations

Sleeplessness weakens the immune system, worsening all health issues, like high blood pressure and headaches.

Also, sleeping problems can cause psychological symptoms and distress to manifest.

WHAT TO DO?

1. Identify **why you are staying awake**. Is it fear? Worries? Noise?
2. **Slow your body down** with grounding and relaxation exercises.
3. **Find ways to feel safer**, for example by using cultural or spiritual protective practices like protection prayers, holding an amulet or sleeping near loved ones.
4. **Create a wake-up recovery plan** if you cannot fall asleep or if you wake up in the middle of the night try playing a certain song, or remembering a happy memory.
5. **Avoid big meals, alcohol, cigarettes, caffeinated drinks, TV & screens.**
6. **Create a sleeping kit.** Buy a eye mask, scarf and ear plugs. These items block out noise when you live with multiple people.
7. **Create a bedtime ritual** that signals to the body & mind that it is time to go to sleep. Do activities such as a bath, listening to calm music, reading, herbal tea, or meditation. Create bedtime rituals with loved ones & support each other to do them.
8. **Talk to loved ones about their sleeping problems.** Explore how they manage it and their sleeping strategies.





SELF - BLAME

Self-blame occurs when we feel excessively responsible for a stressful event.

Survivors of gender based violence often blame themselves for the harm perpetrated against them, which can cause them to feel low self-worth.



Abusive relationships can keep you locked into a repetitive cycle of self-blame and can cause dependency, people-pleasing, feeling helplessness, traumatic bonding, poor boundaries, inability to say no and self-erasure.

It can be very uncomfortable to blame a perpetrator, thus, blaming yourself can feel easier.

Self-blame can be a way to feel like you never lost control over the situation.

Sadly, this cycle can result in abuse and violence being viewed as normal or expected because it has happened for so long.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1. Remember when you started to blame yourself?** Did someone else lead you to believe it was your fault?
- 2. Reflect on the difference between self-blame and self-reflection.** For example, *"I can't do anything/I'm useless"* versus *"I made a mistake/I tried my best."*
- 3. Interrupt the self-blaming voice by distraction.** For example, playing a song, going for a walk or calling a friend.
- 4. Use affirmations.** What do you want to believe about yourself? Say those words to yourself, such as, *"I am so creative and I know how to not give up."*



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social Isolation happens when you remove yourself from people, places and events in an exaggerated way

Social isolation looks like staying home, spending excessive time alone and avoiding social situations.

It is important to distinguish between:

Reactive Withdrawal: isolation for a short period of time to recover from a painful experience.

AND

Chronic Withdrawal: longer term, involves a lifestyle isolated from people and activities.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1. What are you avoiding?** Why are these things scary or overwhelming to you? What do you need to be able to slowly face these things?
- 2. Connect to the world outside of yourself. You do not need to talk to connect to the world.** Connecting can mean just feeling the sun on your face or spending time watching children laugh and play or watching a flower sway in the wind. All of this is connection too. There is no need to rush connecting with people.
- 3. Do activities that give pleasure** or a sense of accomplishment. This helps you reconnect to the world.
- 4. When we feel safe, social isolation decreases.** Think about the warning signs, coping strategies and safe people places and things that can make you feel safer.
- 5. Talk to a loved one about a time in their life when they socially withdrew** and how they overcame it.
- 6. Create a morning ritual** where you practice one relaxation technique each morning.



SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY

After a traumatic sexual experience, it is common to be distrustful & avoidant of others and to relate differently to touch, intimacy and your sexuality.

Some common concerns include:

- Avoiding or being afraid of sex
- Approaching sex as an obligation
- Experiencing anger, disgust, or guilt when being touched
- Having difficulty becoming aroused
- Feeling pain during sex
- Feeling emotionally distant during sex
- Experiencing intrusive or disturbing sexual thoughts and images
- Difficulty establishing or maintaining an intimate relationship



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **Create safety.** Identify safe people who you can share your feelings and thoughts with openly.
2. **Make a list of the specific ways that sexual violence has affected you.** Sexual violence affects you on every level: physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological.
3. **Identify your triggers.** Triggers can be anything that was present before, during or after the traumatic experience like a song, a smell, or a color.
4. **Reflect on your feelings about your intimacy and sexuality.** What is challenging? What is enjoyable?
5. **Consider talking with your partner** about: How you are feeling, your sexual preferences, what you do not like, what makes you feel uncomfortable and your desires. This might be a new experience for you but it is a way to feel more in control.





DISSOCIATION

Dissociation can happen when a difficult experience, thought or feeling is too painful and you prefer for it not exist.

You disassociate to avoid remembering the painful experience.

Dissociation means your body is present, but your mind is far away.



Dissociation looks like:

- daydreaming
- spacing out
- forgetting
- feeling outside of your body
- Finding yourself somewhere without knowing how you got there

You can disassociate in small and big ways.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. **Identify the things that cause you to disassociate** like sounds, smells, images or feelings.
2. **What makes you feel better when you disassociate?** Determine what allows you to come back to the present reality?
3. **Practice grounding techniques.** You can use self talk, a calming ritual, humming or holding a special object that makes you feel safe.
4. **Practice a healthy lifestyle.** Sleep well. Eat well. Get physical exercise.
5. **Avoid letting strong emotions build up inside of you.** Release them by writing, talking to a friend, singing or any other way that feels good for you.

