

Resilience Following Hate Crimes: Information and Tips

In addition to the fear associated with mass violence incidents in general, hate crimes create an additional level of distress because the perpetrator targets a particular group of people based on hatred and bias. Hate crimes are intended to induce fear and cause psychological harm to an entire group of people. Common responses to hate crimes include fear, anxiety, worry, confusion, and anger. People may develop distrust of people similar to the perpetrator or avoid locations where they feel they may be targeted. This distrust and avoidance can amplify and worsen psychological symptoms. Here are some strategies that can be helpful:

- **Examine your reactions/Seek support.** Take some time to talk with others to clarify what you are feeling and address your reactions to the hate crime. One goal of hate crimes is to make people feel very fearful and isolated – asking others for support can be helpful.
- **Seek accurate information.** Understand that information that is immediately available about the incident can sometimes be inaccurate, and new facts can emerge over time. When seeking information, ensure that any media sites you consult are reputable (though even the most reputable sources sometimes get things wrong at first).
- **Consider the ripple effect.** Even if the hate crime did not immediately affect you or someone you know, a ripple effect occurs through which the incident can affect others in the community and even across the nation. This can be especially true following hate crimes. People similar to the targeted group may think, “This could have happened to me” and may become more fearful. Responding with empathy and understanding can be helpful.
- **Understand common reactions.** Immediately following a hate crime, it is common for people to have significant worry or anxiety about what happened and what may happen in the future, either to them or to their community. Reactions like increased fearfulness, anxiety, difficulty with attention and concentration, and changes in sleep or appetite are fairly common. These reactions tend to lessen within a few weeks of the event but should be monitored over time.
- **Limit media exposure.** Although people typically want to know everything they can about a hate crime, it is possible to consume too much information, especially right after an event. Media exposure can increase stress levels. Limiting how much news coverage you watch and read about the event can help you to cope with the incident and focus on other things. This includes all types of media, such as television, newspaper, and social media.

Resources and information on mass violence incidents, including hate crimes, are available for individuals and communities affected by these horrible crimes. Please visit www.nmvvrc.org/resiliencetools for more information about taking care of yourself and others after a hate crime.