

SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING STRESS and GRIEF REACTIONS

- Let others help you. Talk about your thoughts and feelings as often as you feel the need. Identify friends, family, coworkers, counselors/therapists or spiritual directors who are helpful listeners. Talking about the event and your reactions is part of the healing process.
- You may find yourself becoming irritable or impatient at times. Others may act as if nothing has happened. Recognize that your feelings (sadness, sorrow, confusion, denial, anger, etc.) are all normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Understand that current losses or traumatic events often resurrect prior (old) losses. Multiple losses can weaken previous coping strategies, even ones that seemed to work well for you in the past. This does not imply weakness or instability on your part, it is just how cumulative stress affects one's mind and body.
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself:
 - Be sure to get enough sleep. An increase in fatigue is common at these times, but so is denial of the need to rest. Sleep may be disturbed with nightmares, but these usually lessen as time goes by.
 - Eat a balanced diet. You might even consider reducing caffeinated beverages.
 - Consider relaxation techniques, meditation, or listening to your favorite music.
 - Get some physical exercise -- go to the gym (especially during the first 24-72 hours), take a walk, walk the dog, do yoga, etc.
- There is a temptation when the stress level is high to try to numb the feelings by drinking or using drugs. Attempting to cope by using alcohol or drugs (prescription or recreational) complicates the problem, rather than providing relief or a solution.
- Avoid making major life decisions regarding your job, buying a house or car, moving, etc., during this emotionally unsettling time.
- Try to stay connected with your friends and family. Try to maintain a steady level of productive activity at work and play (but it is ok to pace yourself, too).
- You may discover that you have to write things down for a while, or remind yourself more often, about appointments, meetings, etc.
- Know and respect your personal limitations. Don't make unreasonable demands on yourself. Allow yourself to say "No" without feeling guilty.
- Try to avoid feeling that you have to "get through this quickly" and "get back to your normal routine". Give yourself permission to slow down. However, don't be surprised if you do get back into a normal work and family routine fairly quickly.

Above all, try to be patient and understanding of yourself and others.