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Coping with Violence and Terrorism in the News

Many people find it hard to resist news of traumatic events, such as disasters and terrorist attacks. As awful as it is to watch and read about, many still cannot turn away. Why is this kind of news so hard to resist? Some say it is because people are trying to inform themselves to be prepared in case of future disaster or attacks. Others say that people are watching and reading news in an effort to understand and process the event. Still others say the media is trying to draw you in with exciting images almost like those from an action movie. Whatever the reason, we need to understand the negative effects that this type of news exposure can have.

Watching and listening to news about violence and terrorism can cause stress and anxiety. Research tells us there is a link between watching news of traumatic events, such as terrorist attacks, and a variety of stress symptoms.

There are some proactive steps you can take to limit the negative effects that disturbing news has on you. Some suggestions include:

- Do not watch or listen to the news just before bed.
- Read newspapers or magazines rather than watching television.
- When significant events happen in the news, people tend to watch many more hours of news than they realize, in order to keep up with the information. Make a conscious decision to turn the news off at a certain time.
- If you're hearing the same story or the same disturbing information over and over, consider turning the news off for a while.

You may want to limit the amount and type of news you are viewing if you:

- Feel anxious or stressed after watching a news program
- Cannot turn off the television
- Cannot take part in relaxing or fun activities
- Have trouble sleeping
- Find yourself constantly worrying about your own safety or the safety of your loved ones

If you find that news coverage of violence and terrorism is significantly affecting your mood, outlook, and/or your ability to cope with other stressors in your life, you may want to consider making an appointment with a WellSpan Employee Assistance Program provider. We are here to support you through life's challenges. Visit www.WellSpan.org/EAP to locate a provider convenient to you.

Adapted from the Nat. Ctr. for PTSD