

The recent Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade has caused uncertainty for many in our campus community. Employees may be experiencing a wide range of emotions.

The Employee Assistance Office is here to support you as you process this decision. We are a free and confidential resource. No one will know what you discuss with our counselors, or even that you used our services. The Employee Assistance Office has never and will never share the details of our conversations with clients.

We encourage you to seek support in whatever way feels right for you. If you would like to speak with a counselor, you can schedule a confidential appointment with the Employee Assistance Office at eao@mailplus.wisc.edu or 608-263-2987. You can also connect with a counseling provider in the community with LifeMatters, available 24/7 by calling 1-800-634-6433 or by texting "Hello" to 61295.

Coping with a Traumatic Event

Recent mass shootings in New York, Texas, and elsewhere have caused distress for many on campus. Feeling stressed after a traumatic event is common. We all respond to stress a little differently, so it is not at all unusual to feel sorrow, fear, anger, grief, or disillusionment. Some people experience shock, which is a numbness that is like feeling nothing at all.

Stress can also impact us physically. Some people may have trouble sleeping or concentrating, while others may find themselves unable to eat or remember even simple tasks. Please know that these reactions are completely normal and often pass after a short period of time.

The best thing you can do to help them pass is to allow yourself to experience whatever feelings you may have. Trying to fight against those feelings or talk yourself out of them will only prolong the experience. Instead, work through those feelings. While traumatic events can have short- and long-term impacts, the following steps will help you cope.

Take care of yourself:

Sometimes, traumatic events can make us feel like the world has turned upside down. It can be hard to maintain healthy routines, but it is neither selfish nor rude to put your needs first. This can be as simple as eating meals and waking up on a schedule. Try to eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of rest, and include physical activity into your day. Avoid alcohol and drugs, which can make it harder to recognize and manage our true feelings. You might also try things like deep breathing, yoga, meditation, or other relaxation techniques, which help us manage stress and get better rest.

Be thoughtful about media exposure:

It's okay to stay informed, but limit the amount of news you take in, and be careful about the sources of that news. Even reliable information should be taken in only as needed. Take a break from consuming news stories about the event. Repeated exposure to graphic or traumatic news will likely increase your feelings of distress.

Get support:

Talking about your feelings with people who care about you can be comforting and reassuring. Others who may have shared your experience or have similar views will help you feel less alone. The key is to find someone who really listens to your concerns, without judgment and without trying to “fix” them. Consider talking to friends, family, trusted colleagues, a faith or community leader, or a professional counselor to process your feelings and manage your stress.

Talk with your children:

Our impulse may be to shield children from traumatic events or difficult information, but having honest conversations about scary or traumatizing events can validate their feelings and make them feel safe. Use age-appropriate language to let them know that you’re open to talk about what happened, and empathetically listen to their questions and concerns without judgment. Remind all children that while there are individuals who hurt other people, there are many more people working to keep them safe.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has created a one-page resource for additional guidance on speaking with children after a crisis.

Link: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/after-crisis-helping-young-children-heal>

Do something productive:

Helping others not only provides important support to those in need, but also helps us feel better. Taking action can give you peace of mind and help you to feel in control. Look for resources in your community that allow you to help people who may have been impacted by the traumatic incident or who simply have other needs.

Remember, healing takes time. If you find that you’re having a hard time coping, you are not alone. Please reach out to the Employee Assistance Office at eao@mailplus.wisc.edu or 608-263-2987. You can also connect with LifeMatters 24/7 by calling 1-800-634-6433 or texting “Hello” to 61295. Trained counselors can provide you with support as you process these distressing events.

To learn more about self-care and traumatic events, including information about the importance of recognizing racial trauma, explore the links below:

- <https://psychcentral.com/news/buffalo-mass-shooting-experts-say-self-care-is-crucial>
- <https://www.mhanational.org/racial-trauma>
- <https://psychcentral.com/lib/racial-trauma-adolescents#symptoms>

Click the following links to learn more about gun violence prevention:

- <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>
- <https://www.apa.org/topics/gun-violence-crime/mass-shooting-resources>

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This month's promotional content includes:

Flyers:

- Making the Most of Downtime
- Emergency Planning
- Self-Care During Times of Social Change
- Successful Coaching (for managers)

Posters:

- Slow Down
- Stormy Weather
- Choose Wisely