

On the anniversary

Anniversaries of traumatic events like a September 11, a battle in the Vietnam War, major bushfires or accidents, and tragedies such as Port Arthur and Hoddle Street may trigger some unpleasant emotions in people, even if they were not directly affected or involved. Seeing images in the media again on the anniversary, or recalling our reaction at the time, may be upsetting.

If you are concerned about how you may react to the anniversary, here are some tips that may help you cope:

- Recognise that an anniversary can be a difficult period. Give yourself permission to feel some distress; it is perfectly normal and understandable
- Try to limit the amount of TV and radio you watch and listen to about the anniversary, as well as talking about it with other people
- Keep your normal routine going, but allow yourself some time out if you need it
- Plan your days and build in plenty of relaxing and enjoyable activities
- Spend time with other people – especially those you care about – and don't be afraid to ask for a bit of support if you need it
- Look after yourself: get plenty of rest and exercise and eat sensibly; cut back on stimulants such as tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and cigarettes
- If you drink alcohol keep an eye on how much you drink
- Try to relax. Listen to soothing music, go for a walk, take a hot bath, whatever works for you

Sometimes distressing memories can be difficult to overcome and you may benefit from some professional help. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need to. The best place to start is your doctor. If you need immediate help call Lifeline on 13 11 14 for confidential 24 hour counselling and referrals. Visit our website at www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au for other information on trauma and mental health.