

TOOLS FOR PROCESSING TRAUMATIC EVENTS – *Helpful Tools for processing the traumatic event of Charlie Kirk’s assassination on September 10th, 2025 (...and other violent/traumatic events)*

Are you experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms?

- *Intrusive/ uncontrollable memories/ flashbacks/ nightmares*
- *Severe anxiety/ avoidance*
- *Negative changes in thinking and mood*
- *Changes in physical and emotional reactions (arousal symptoms)*

After witnessing trauma (even vicariously, if you weren’t actually there), you may notice feeling shock, anger, irritability, fear, hopelessness, low energy, depression, numbness, overwhelm, hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping, withdrawal— all on a continuum of varying intensities. With time, careful attention and self-care symptoms generally get better.

The trauma may also affect your sense of safety and security, affecting your political views and your view of the world. These feelings are completely normal after experiencing a traumatic event. There are things you can do to process and make it through this difficult time. (There’s even something called post-traumatic growth or resilience that can come from experiencing and getting very difficult things.) Please do not suffer in silence. *Trauma isolates...but connection helps!*

1. **Practice Deep Breathing/ Mindfulness/ Grounding.** Take slow, deep breaths. Do something called, “square breathing” where you: 1) breathe in for four counts, 2) hold for four counts, 3) breathe out for four counts, 4) and do it at least four times.
2. **Practice self-compassion.** Be gentle with yourself as you go through this difficult time. Practice self-compassion... it’s okay to not be okay sometimes.
3. **Write about it (process writing).** Process your thoughts and feelings in writing. (It’s free and available 24/7/365). Start with a list of negative “(feel)...” statements (e.g. “I’m angry...,” “I’m sad...,” “I hate...”). As you identify and give voice to your emotions they will lose their intensity.
4. **Talk about it.** Process your feelings with someone you trust who won’t judge you (friends, family members, community support groups that align with your values, clergy, mental health professionals).
5. **Participate in vigils/ memorials.** Participating in vigils or memorials allows you to reflect, examine, and not lose hope.
6. **Pray about it/Engage in spiritual practices.** Talk to God about it. Turning to Someone greater than yourself (and man) helps you keep a broader, divine perspective. Participate in religious practices/ services. Faith communities can provide a sense of belonging and safety that is essential for recovery.
7. **Limit disturbing news intake.** Take a break from your phone, social media, TV—especially as it negatively affects your mood or wellbeing.
8. **Get back into your routine.** As you get back into your regular daily routine, it will begin to create a feeling of normalcy again and help you feel more in control of your life.
9. **Do something productive/something for someone else.** As you get involved in creating meaning and purpose by donating, volunteering, serving others, engaging in healthy hobbies/ activities, etc. it helps you focus on things you can control and takes you outside yourself.
10. **Keep a gratitude journal.** Keep a list or a cell-phone note of things you are grateful for each day. This can help you shift your focus to more positive components in your life.
11. **Get active.** Go for a walk, dance, exercise, do yoga. It’s especially great to get out in nature. Physical activity is well known to release tension from the body and calm the nervous system.
12. **Listen to music.** Music can be very therapeutic. Music can lower the stress response (cortisol) especially if you also hum, sing, or dance along.
13. **Seek additional support.** Anyone can connect with a caring counselor, who can help, by accessing the options below. Using the “988 Lifeline” is free. Calling, texting, or chatting is confidential. Connecting can save your life.
 - a. **9-8-8 Lifeline.** Visit [988Lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) or suicidepreventionlifeline.org (both go to the same place) or call 800-273-TALK (8255). (It’s the same as calling 9-8-8.)
 - i. Call 988 (free crisis line/support)
 - ii. Text 988 (free text line/ support)
 - iii. Chat (go to 988Lifeline.org)

- b. **SafeUT app.** Visit SafeUT.org or download the *SafeUT app* - for free 24/7 support for students, parents, school, and faculty staff in Utah; operated by the University of Utah; only supported within the state of Utah.
- c. **SafeUT Frontline app.** Visit SafeUT.org or download the *SafeUT Frontline app* - for free 24/7 support for frontline workers (law enforcement, fire/EMS, health care providers, or family member of frontline workers).
- d. **SafeUT National Guard app.** Visit SafeUT.org or download the *SafeUT National Guard app* - for free 24/7 support for national guard soldiers, veterans, civilian personnel, and their families.

14. **Seek professional help.** Seek professional help (individual, couple, family, or group therapy) following a traumatic event as soon as possible. Therapy helps you reframe negative beliefs, thoughts, and feelings to build resilience, restore balance, and find healthier ways to cope. Counseling is especially important if you are having trouble functioning or not feeling like you are getting back in control at home, school, or work. It's also especially important if you continue to have disturbing thoughts and feelings after more than a month.

- a. **9-1-1.** If you are feeling suicidal, call 911 or get to the nearest hospital emergency department (ER).
- b. **2-1-1 by United Way.** Dial 211 or download the app and select "Mental Health" for a list of local counseling services, etc. United Way of Utah County connects individuals and families with local services including physical and mental health resources.
- c. **PsychologyToday.** Visit PsychologyToday.com for a list of counselors/ therapists across the country. You can filter for specific locations, online or in-person (in-office) counseling sessions, the gender of the therapist, type of therapy/specialties (e.g. anxiety, depression, trauma), insurances they take, languages they speak, faith orientation (LDS/Christian), cost, etc.

There are also many group therapy options available. Group therapy can be cheaper than individual therapy and has many unique benefits:

- 1) You feel seen and heard, realize you're not alone, and find support and belonging
- 2) You come to like yourself more
- 3) You break patterns and relate to others in healthier ways
- 4) You feel hopeful
- 5) You address your biases

To find group therapy options online or near you search for "Support Groups" at PsychologyToday.com and then type in your state (e.g. "Utah") to find all support group options in your state. In the state of Utah, some of the therapists that offer group therapy include: Chris Wilkins, Tim Cregor, Jacob Christian Hunsaker, Sara Terry, Sandra Lim, Paul T. Callister, Halie Boardman, Trish Sullivant, Dagney Strossner, Robert Robinson, Emma Allen, Courtney Howard, Victoria Choate, Connie F. Hanson, Brad Simpson, Aimee Mortensen, James Noorlander, James Willhite, Brandon Yabko.

This handout taken from the following resources:

- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/health/cant-unsee-it-dealing-trauma-watching-someone-die>
- <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/tx/south-texas-el-paso/your-mental-health/2025/09/12/how-to-cope-with-tragic-news>
- <https://www.mountainstherapy.com/blog/coping-political-anxiety-charlie-kirk-shooting-death?srsId=AfmBOorsGYS2Zi6YPnZ8WsD6U5BPRU0coKcVgdRzR-A6oDVCzvsFXPSr>
- <https://www.drmitchkeil.com/blog/charlie-kirk-shooting-mental-health-crisis/>
- <https://www.drmitchkeil.com/group-therapy-2/>
- <https://abc7.com/post/seeing-graphic-images-surrounding-charlie-kirks-assassination-can-leave-lasting-trauma-psychiatrist-offers-advice-how-cope/17797136/>