

Managing Reactions to Political Change

A changing political climate, including rapidly changing policies and the unknown impact of those changes, can affect all of us, whether we hear about them on the news or belong to a community that is directly impacted.

For some people, the changes may be welcomed. For others, the changes may feel highly stressful. For those who experience the changes as stressful, here are some tips on how to take care of yourself and navigate conversations about difficult events.

Reactions to Stressful Events

Many people have a range of physical and emotional reactions to the current political climate and the uncertainty it may bring, including:

- Fear or disbelief
- Disorientation or numbing
- Difficulty making decisions
- Need for information
- Seeking help for you and your family
- Helpfulness to others
- Change in appetite or digestive problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Anger and suspicion
- Crying
- Lack of interest and depression
- Frustration or feelings of loss of control
- The need to defend or blame
- Moodiness and irritability
- Anxiety about the future
- Disappointment and rejection of help
- Isolating from family and friends
- Feelings of guilt
- Conflict within relationships

At the same time, it is important to remember that these situations can also bring out people's strengths. People often come together to help one another, and you may see signs of resiliency in yourself and others that bring on feelings of pride.



Five Ways to Manage Your Reactions

1. Monitor and Consider Limiting Media Access

Limit media viewing and repeated exposure to distressing images. Continuous exposure to ongoing news cycles and the media can impact your well-being, reactions, and nervous system.

2. Focus On What You Can Control

Many things may feel out of control in your life right now, so it is important to focus on those aspects of your life that you can control, even if they may seem small or inconsequential: cooking a meal, planning a date with a friend, or completing an assignment. Ultimately, these are important things whose outcomes are in your hands.

You may also consider engaging in activities where you can express opinions, appreciation, and concerns. This may include advocacy or community service/volunteering. Engaging in such activities may increase your sense of control and belonging.

3. Maintain Routines

Maintaining a daily structure helps us all feel safe and in control, but we should also recognize that some flexibility may be necessary during highly stressful times.

4. Find Balance in Your Life

During a crisis, people often report excessive behaviors – working too much, eating too much, sleeping too much, and even drinking too much. Avoid excessively watching television reports of the event. Set limits for yourself on activities and make sure you are taking care of yourself in all areas – social, behavioral, and spiritual.

Our assumptions about the world being a safe place may be shattered, and anything we can do that gives our life meaning or gives us a plan of action will help manage our stress reactions.

5. Practice Self-Care

Engaging in activities that bring us comfort and joy are especially important during challenging times. Engage in self-care strategies that help fill you up and recharge your battery while also having self-compassion. Some strategies include spending time with friends and loved ones, taking a walk, and engaging in breathing or mindfulness exercises.

If it is meaningful to you, don't hesitate to seek out religious and spiritual support from your religious leaders and community members. If it is part of your practice, engaging in meaningful prayer can also be soothing in distressing times.