

November 2018

CURRENT EVENT

- On 11/7/18 a gunman killed 11 individuals at a bar in Thousand Oaks, CA that was hosting an for college students. College students may be struggling to understand how colleges student could be the victims of a mass shooting and why such a thing would happen.
- The gunman has been identified as a Marine Corps Veteran. News reports are stating he struggled with mental illness and that he may have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.
- The news and mass media are providing extensive coverage of mass violence and mental health which can exacerbate stress and anxiety students may be experiencing related to their own mental illness, mental illness in their families and/or their safety public spaces. Anxiety and stress can affect their well-being and engagement in class.

UW TACOMA CONTEXT

- UW Tacoma administered the Healthy Minds survey in 2017 (n = 1,027).
 - 29% experience severe or moderate anxiety.
 - 26% reported emotional or mental difficulties affected their academic performance 3-5 days in the four weeks prior to the survey.
 - 23% said their mental health affected them 6 days or more in the previous 4 weeks.
- At UW Tacoma, roughly 20% of our students are military-affiliated.

DRAFT STATEMENT TO SHARE WITH CLASS

- I want to acknowledge that there has been another mass shooting in the United States. The frequency of mass shootings, and issues in the recent election, mean we have been hearing a lot about gun violence, safety-in-public and mental health in the news and on social media.
- These issues may impact many of us directly or indirectly. It is normal for these kinds of news events to trigger strong or difficult feelings – especially for folks who experience mental illness or have family or friends who do. I want to affirm that UW Tacoma does not think mental illness should have a stigma.
- If you have a mental health crisis you can be seen at any time at the Student Counseling Services during our Walk-In Hours. If you have a mental health crisis outside of those times, you can be seen during our clinical hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm when the university is open and on a space available basis (there may be a wait for you to see a mental health provider). For after hours and weekend mental health crisis you can contact the Pierce County Crisis Line (800) 576-7764. For emergencies, dial 911. If you would like to access mental health services outside of the Student Counseling Center, you can contact our office if you would like assistance with finding a mental health provider.

Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching has created **Teaching in Times of Crisis**, a general resource about how times of crisis can affect the learning environment and ways faculty can respond. You can access the resource on their website:

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/crisis/>

Managing Distress in the Aftermath of a Mass Shooting | Resources for Students

This content was created by the American Psychological Association and adapted minimally by Student and Enrollment Services.

When a mass shooting occurs you may struggle to understand how it could occur and why such a terrible thing would happen. There may never be satisfactory answers to these questions.

We do know, though, that it is typical for people to experience a variety of emotions following traumatic societal events. These feelings can include shock, sorrow, numbness, fear, anger, disillusionment, grief and others. You may find that you have trouble sleeping, concentrating, eating or remembering even simple tasks. You may feel that the world is a more dangerous place today than you did yesterday. It will take some time to recover your sense of equilibrium. These feelings are common and should pass after a while. Over time, by caring for yourself and seeking and accepting care from others the emotional impact will lessen.

You can strengthen your resilience — the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity — in the days and weeks ahead. Here are some tips that can help.

Talk about it. Ask for support from people who care about you and who will listen to your concerns. Receiving support and care can be comforting and reassuring. It often helps to speak with others who have shared your experience so you do not feel so different or alone.

Strive for balance. When a tragedy occurs, it's easy to become overwhelmed and have a negative or pessimistic outlook. Balance that viewpoint by reminding yourself of people and events which are meaningful and comforting, even encouraging. Striving for balance empowers you and allows for a healthier perspective on yourself and the world around you.

Turn it off and take a break. You may want to keep informed, but try to limit the amount of news you take in whether it's from the Internet, television, newspapers or magazines. While getting the news informs you, being overexposed to it can actually increase your stress. The images can be very powerful in reawakening your feeling of distress. Also, schedule some breaks to distract yourself from thinking about the incident and focus instead on something you enjoy. Try to do something that will lift your spirits.

Honor your feelings. Remember that it is common to have a range of emotions after a traumatic incident. You may experience intense stress similar to the effects of a physical injury. For example, you may feel exhausted, sore or off balance.

Take care of yourself. Engage in healthy behaviors to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress. Eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of rest and build physical activity into your day. Avoid alcohol and drugs because they can suppress your feelings rather than help you to manage and lessen your distress. In addition, alcohol and drugs may intensify your emotional or physical pain. Establish or re-establish routines such as eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. If you are having trouble sleeping, try some relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation or yoga.

Help others or do something productive. Locate resources in your community on ways that you can help people who have been affected by this incident, or have other needs. Helping someone else often has the benefit of making you feel better, too.

For many people, using the tips and strategies mentioned above may be sufficient. At times, however an individual can get stuck or have difficulty managing intense reactions. Staff in the Student Counseling Center can help. Stop by MAT 354 or call 253-692-4522 to schedule an appointment.

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