

FAQ On Trauma & Mental Health

As Baltimore City deals with the tragic events surrounding the untimely death of Freddie Gray, the psychological trauma is deeply impacting many members of our community. Traumatic events affect not only the individual directly impacted by the event, but also those around the individual – family members, neighbors, friends and caregivers. The need to address trauma is an integral part of public health and has become a fundamental obligation for the delivery of mental health services. As part of the city’s response to the recent tragic events, BCHD is working with schools, churches and community organizations to provide these services and support communities in the healing process. Below are some FAQs on Trauma and Mental Health for your use.

FAQ on Trauma & Mental Health

Q: Where do I get help?

If you need immediate assistance, please call the Baltimore Crisis Response 24/7 crisis hotline at [410\) 433-5175](tel:410-433-5175).

Individuals and families who need assistance scheduling an appointment for mental health services, should call Behavioral Health System Baltimore at [410-637-1900](tel:410-637-1900), option #1.

If you are requesting counseling for a group, please call 311 or email bchd2@baltimorecity.gov. We will match you up a licensed mental health professional.

Q: Given what has been happening around Baltimore I don't know what to think or feel.

There are no right or wrong feelings. Sadness, anger, hurt, disappointment, frustration, and fear are all appropriate responses.

Q: What can I do with my feelings?

Speaking with friends and relatives can help. It lets you hear that you are not alone. It is also important that you take care of yourself by exercising, eating appropriately and getting plenty of sleep.

Q. How do I talk to my child or friend about what is going on?

It is really important to speak with your children to help them understand that their feelings are normal. Listen to your child and let them express their point of view. Maybe they think the same thing could happen to them. Maybe they know the person who died.

Maybe they feel they have to show in a big way how angry they are about this unfair thing that happened. Let them know that it doesn't help the neighborhood or the city for these people who are mad to destroy property or hurt others. A better way to get out their anger is by talking to someone who cares, like a family member; put all their energy into making the city a better place to live; form a citizen's group that asks to meet peacefully with the police; go on a peace march.

Explain that when someone gets hurt or dies, the whole neighborhood/city gets hurt. The neighborhood/city has to rebuild and be helped to come to life again.

Q: What if my child or friend says that they want to “punish those who caused the problem”, what can I do?

If the child uses words like 'punish' or 'get back at' the person who caused the conflicts, tell them that revenge will not improve the situation. Encourage them not to make a bad choice. A bad choice would be to let their anger out by hurting someone, destroying property, disrespecting someone. Try to help them think about what they can positively do that will make a difference. Come up with solutions and a plan.

Q. What can I do to keep a normal routine in my home?

It is important that you try to maintain a normal routine in your home. Have regular family meals and outings. Try to limit television viewing and social media coverage of the events. Make sure you and your children eat regular meals and get enough sleep.

Q: Will Baltimore recover? Will I always feel the way I do now?

Baltimore will recover, and you will too. Like people, cities are resilient. However, for all of us this has to be a wake up call to think about how we can relate to each other differently and build the city we will be proud to call home.

Q: What is the city doing about this issue?

In response to the tragic events that have struck Baltimore, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Baltimore Health Commissioner Dr. Leana Wen are coordinating efforts across multiple city agencies and private organizations to address the trauma that many individuals in the community are experiencing. As part of this effort, the Baltimore City Health Department is working with schools, churches and community organizations to provide supportive counseling services to communities impacted by recent events.

The citywide trauma counseling/mental health response includes:

- Ensuring 24/7 availability of mental health crisis services;
- Providing group counseling and support for community members through schools, religious institutions, and community organizations;
- Coordinating availability of mental health resources and matching them with ongoing need to promote citywide healing.