



# World Mental Health Day 2023

## Employee Newsletter October 2023

World Mental Health Day is on October 10th every year. The day has been created to help spread more awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health matters.

While progress has been made over the years, there are still many harmful stigmas surrounding mental health. This awareness day, which is recognised by The World Health Organisation, aims to help create an open forum for discussions about what we can do to ensure mental health issues are taken as seriously as physical health issues.

### When Did World Mental Health Awareness Day Begin?

World Mental Health Awareness Day began in 1992 as part of an initiative that the World Federation for Mental Health put in place. The idea was first conceived by the organisation's Deputy Secretary General, Richard Hunter.

Over the last 31 years, this day has grown into a worldwide effort to collectively highlight mental health matters and unite us all in helping to support people with mental health issues.

### What Causes Poor Mental Health?

There's no one specific cause for

mental health issues developing. For most people, a wide range of factors will play a part in affecting their mental health at work and in life, but this will vary depending on each specific individual.

Below are some of the potential things that may lead to poor mental health.

- Loneliness and social isolation
- Poor housing/living conditions
- Poverty, debt, and other financial problems
- Domestic violence and domestic abuse
- Being the victim of a traumatic crime
- Head injuries or neurological conditions
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Bigotry and discrimination
- Childhood trauma and abuse
- Long-term stress
- Bereavement

### Spotting the Signs of Mental Health Struggles

Being able to spot the early signs of mental health issues, whether for loved ones or yourself, can play an important role in helping to prevent them becoming worse. Some signs of a potential mental health issue developing are listed below:

- Fluctuating low to high moods
- Constant fear, worry, and anxiety
- Sleeping too little/too much
- Significant changes in appetite

- A constant irritability
- A constant feeling of hopelessness

### How Can I Help Raise Awareness and Do my Part?

Doing your part for World Mental Health Day 2023 doesn't have to involve making a huge gesture. Like many things in life, it's sometimes the smaller things that are important.

Never forget that if you're checking in on loved ones, being brave enough to speak honestly about your own mental health, and helping to make these discussions happen, then you're already playing a pivotal role.

### World Mental Health Day: Final Thoughts

For World Mental Health Day, never forget to support others but to also prioritise your own wellbeing too. Health Assured's Assistance Programmes offer support, advice, and guidance on a wide range of mental health matters. If you, or someone you know, are ever struggling with mental health issues, our qualified counsellors are ready to listen to you, 24/7.



# Coping with trauma that arises from natural disasters

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Natural disasters such as the Morocco Earthquake are considered to be traumatic events that can potentially trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in survivors and family members. They have an unparalleled potential to produce severe levels of stress, anxiety, and anger in those who are affected.

People may have lost their loved ones, their homes, and even entire communities. As a result, they may feel an overwhelming sense of helplessness; living in temporary camps for extended periods of time, loss of their belongings, and social support networks they once leaned on.

## Recognising the Emotional Impacts

It's important to recognise that it is very normal to experience PTSD-like symptoms in the aftermath of a traumatic event. Furthermore, victims do not necessarily need to have experienced the disaster first-hand to be psychologically affected.

In the wake of the Morocco Earthquake, relatives living in the UK and elsewhere will undoubtedly be worried for their safety and well-being, possibly being subject to hours of dire television coverage, coupled with an ability to get

information directly from the ground. Disasters such as this can have an emotional impact on someone even from afar.

## Common Symptoms of Trauma

According to the American Psychological Association, the following are common symptoms of trauma:

- Flashbacks – repeated and vivid memories of the event that lead to physical reactions such as rapid heartbeat or sweating
- Fear that the emotional event will be repeated – pertinent to earthquake disasters as aftershocks can occur
- Mood becomes intense, polarised, and unpredictable. Feelings of anxiety and depression are common.
- Confusion or difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, and chest pain

Earthquake survivors are recommended to seek professional guidance and mental health support if they are struggling to regain control of their lives in the aftermath of a disaster or if they continue to suffer from PTSD symptoms.

## Ways to Cope with Natural Disasters

Though the effects of natural disasters can be devastating physically and emotionally, there are steps you can take to reduce the trauma and help you cope.

- Talk about the effect of natural disasters – share your feelings and experiences with others. Holding in your emotions will only make them more intense.
- Focus on self-care – caring for your mind, body, and spirit can increase your ability to cope with traumatic events. Practice mindfulness, make sure you eat well, exercise regularly, and try to get enough sleep.
- Identify mental health support and counselling services – crisis counsellors can offer guidance and support to those suffering from PTSD symptoms. We offer Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) designed to help deal with high-risk traumatic situations, including pre-incident support, crisis intervention, and post-incident support.
- Connect with social support – research shows that early intervention, access to resources, and support from others can be a major factor in relieving the emotional strain of traumatic events.

## We are here to help

Health Assured delivers specialist **Critical Incident Stress Management** that has been developed to help you and your relatives cope following a traumatic experience such as a natural disaster.

Our trauma counselling network is on hand to assist you and your employees through any difficult period, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.