TRAUMA SURVIVORS: FINDING RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY
Trauma is an emotional response to an event or set of circumstances that is physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting negative effects on a person’s mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.\(^1\)

Traumatic events can include the following:

- Physical and sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Community-based violence
- War
- Natural disasters
- Acts of terror
- Violence
- Human trafficking

Trauma can affect individuals regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Trauma can also affect communities, for example, through a natural disaster or act of violence. Many adults and children experience trauma at some point in their lives:

- In the United States, 61% of men and 51% of women report exposure to at least one lifetime traumatic event.\(^2\)
About two-thirds of the U.S. population reported experiencing at least one personal traumatic event before the age of 18, and one in four children were exposed to at least one form of family violence during their lifetimes.

Reactions to traumatic events can vary, and can appear immediately or over time. Trauma survivors may experience stress, fear, and anger, hopelessness about the future, detachment or lack of concern about others, trouble concentrating or making decisions, feeling jumpy and getting startled easily, or have disturbing dreams and memories or flashbacks.

Some people may turn to unhealthy behaviors and use alcohol or drugs in an attempt to cope with trauma and its effects. It is not uncommon for people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), for example, to develop substance use disorders. For people with mental and/or substance use disorders, ignoring trauma can hinder recovery and lead to poor physical health as well.

FINDING SUPPORT
Resilience is the ability to bounce back, cope with adversity, and endure during difficult situations – most people will show resilience after a traumatic event. For some, however, the journey to recovery can be challenging and can also affect their families and loved ones.

Families may devote a significant time and energy helping a loved one cope with a traumatic event, sometimes leading to strained relationships, and a drain on family resources. When a survivor turns to unhealthy coping strategies, like using drugs or alcohol, these issues may be exacerbated.

As family members adjust to the emotions and stresses of caring for someone in recovery, some of the best support often comes from others who are or were in similar circumstances. Trauma survivors and their families can share their experiences, as well as read others’ stories of hope and resilience at www.recoverymonth.gov/personal-stories.

PROMOTING RECOVERY
Survivors of traumatic events—and the families that support them—can find strength and resiliency, and ultimately navigate the journey to recovery.

Available resources include:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255)** (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org): Provides a free, 24-hour helpline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or experiencing emotional distress.
- **SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746** (www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline): Provides year-round, free and confidential crisis counseling to disaster survivors experiencing stress, anxiety, and other disaster- or trauma-related behavioral health symptoms.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** (www.thehotline.org/help): Provides advocates who are available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week to talk confidentially with anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.
- **Coping with Traumatic Events: Resources for Children, Parents, Educators, and Other Professionals** (www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/coping-traumatic-events-resources): Offers information and resource links on trauma for children, parents, educators, and professionals.
Surviving trauma and leading a fulfilling, healthy life is a reality for millions. Knowing that there is hope and recovery from traumatic events helps individuals and families thrive, and in turn, encourages others to share their stories of recovery.

For more information, including Recovery Month resources for families and the community, public service announcements, events across the country, and social media tools, visit the Recovery Month website at www.recoverymonth.gov/.

This list is not exhaustive of all available resources. Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the Recovery Month website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.


