

Young Adults - staying strong one year on from Grenfell



One year on....what can we expect?

It's natural and very common to have what's known as an 'anniversary reaction' one year after a traumatic event like the Grenfell tragedy.

No matter how well you might have managed to put memories of the fire away or only think about them when you choose to, the anniversary will be a powerful reminder.

Research says that great distress can occur during the month in which the trauma took place. Not all of you will experience an anniversary reaction, but knowing

what to expect in advance might be helpful.

Why does an 'anniversary reaction' happen?

How might my mind and body react to the anniversary?

What can help?

What rituals might be helpful?

Being kind to yourself

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How long will the reaction last?

Why does an 'anniversary reaction' happen?

A reaction to the anniversary tells us that we are still working on moving through the trauma. It is a normal part of the grieving process. The brain pulls us back into old thought patterns that bring up painful emotions.

You might begin to experience strange symptoms days or weeks before or after the anniversary and not know what is happening to you.

There could be different triggers for different people, for example, the start of Ramadan (15th May), the Public Inquiry (21st May), and the anniversary date itself.

How might my mind and body react to the anniversary?

You might find that the same feelings, bodily responses and thoughts that you had at the time, repeat themselves all over again.

You might have strong memories of the fear or pain that you experienced. You might feel overwhelmingly sad, shocked or angry, being reminded of the tragedy and of possessions, and homes you have lost or classmates and loved ones who have died.

You might be surprised how you feel. For example, you might expect to feel sad but instead feel frustrated about things that are still very difficult for you. You might feel numb and not feel any emotion at all, and might feel guilty as a result.

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The memories might be so intense that it could be difficult for you to sleep or to concentrate on learning.

What can help?

It can be helpful to prepare and plan ahead as much as possible.

Find time to talk with a trusted adult - talking about what might happen and how you might feel can help to release some of the anxiety and pressure surrounding it.

Find a way to acknowledge the date in your own way. You might be interested in taking part in an event in your school or community or you might choose to try to ignore the anniversary. Don't feel you have to participate in ceremonies or memorials. Think about what's right for you. There is no one right reaction.

Be aware that there will be lots of distressing imagery shown again on TV and social media. Try

a 'digital power off' by switching off social media alerts on smartphones for at least some of the time around the anniversary.

GROWING AROUND GRIEF

HERE IS A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT GRIEF AND RECOVERY:



THIS CIRCLE REPRESENTS A LIFE THAT IS TOTALLY CONSUMED BY GRIEF.

ONE SHOULD ACCEPT THAT THE GRIEF WILL NEVER ENTIRELY DISAPPEAR, BUT OVER TIME IT WILL BECOME A SMALLER, MORE MANAGEABLE PART OF LIFE.

EVEN THOUGH THE GRIEF IS STILL THERE, A NEW LIFE EXPANDS AROUND IT; ONE IS ABLE TO GROW AROUND GRIEF.

Munroe 1996 Growing around Grief adapted from Tonkin

What rituals might be helpful?

Listening to a certain song

Watching a movie that makes you laugh or cry

Finding healthy and positive ways to express yourself through music, art, writing, yoga

Getting together with friends for a shared activity such as cooking a meal, singing, dancing

Keeping active - gym, running, cycling and other sports activities that you enjoy

Visiting a place that reminds you of your life before the tragedy

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Calling or visiting someone who helped you after the tragedy

Planting flowers or a tree

Be kind to yourself - kindness is a survival skill¹

Kindness has been one of the essential teachings of every spiritual philosophy in the world since time began.

Even the smallest act of kindness can have immense power - a listening ear can offer hope when there wasn't any.

Remind yourself about your own acts of kindness

Remind yourself about how you have been managing to cope this last year

Think about some of the extraordinary challenges you have overcome

Let friends and trusted adults know the kindnesses that you have noticed and appreciated about them, for example, their warmth, patience, humour, forgiveness etc.

Think about a strength that you have developed since the tragedy

How long will the anniversary reaction last?

This difficult time is almost always temporary. You are likely to feel better within a week or two and symptoms will fade away on their own.

Try to find ways to replace some of your painful memories. It could take a while for you to recover your full resilience, but eventually you will start to be able to make the memories smaller (for example, by trying to remember from a distance as if watching from behind a screen), and make choices about which parts of the memories you hold onto.

If you are still experiencing significant emotional distress after a few weeks, speak to someone in your school who can arrange professional help for you.

'Even terrible things can teach some good things - like understanding,

¹ Teenbreathe.co.uk What is kindness

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*caring, courage...and how to be okay
during difficult times'²*

² Marge Heegaard (1991) When something terrible happens