

Coping with anxiety, fear during a rocky presidential transition

January 8 2021, by Dennis Thompson



The nation is in a state of shock and outrage over Wednesday's riotous

siege on the U.S. Capitol Building by supporters of President Donald Trump, and there could be still worse to come before the Jan. 20 inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

So, taking care of your mental and [physical health](#) will be important in the coming days of trial and tribulation in the United States, American Psychiatric Association President Dr. Jeffrey Geller said Thursday.

That's even more crucial if you're a parent, Geller added.

"You want to reassure the child that they are safe, that home is safe and, far more important, that you're taking care of yourself," Geller said. "It's very hard to take care of your child if you're not taking care of yourself."

People can help ease their personal stress by sticking to a normal daily routine, sleeping well, staying hydrated, eating healthy, exercising and participating in self-calming techniques like meditation or yoga, Geller said.

Even though they seem tempting in times of stress, you should try to avoid the use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco, Geller added.

Instead, have conversations with the people in your life and limit your use of social media, he suggested.

"You want to reach out to the people with whom you have a close relationship," Geller said. "Better a few people with a close relationship than a myriad of people that you have casual relationships with, because that's going to compound and fuel exchanges of information, some of which is going to be misinformation—not in a malevolent way, but just that there's lots of information floating around and some of it's reliable and some of it's not so reliable."

Also, don't be afraid to reach out for professional help if you become overwhelmed, Geller added.

"If you are feeling anxious or unsafe, talk with your family and friends. If your feelings continue and it is impacting your [daily life](#), do not hesitate to seek help through your primary care provider, a psychiatrist or other [mental health](#) professional, or other resources in your community," he said.

Parents should talk with their children about the events of the day and help them process what is happening in the nation, said Dr. Asim Shah, executive vice chair in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"We need to listen to them, we need talk to them and we need to be there for them. We need to ask what is going on in their minds, and then talk it out. We don't need to impose our opinions on them," Shah said.

Limit kids' exposure to the news, especially if your children are younger, he advised. Watch the news sparingly with older kids, but remember that they are looking to you for guidance.

"You have to be careful in terms of your emotions and your judgment. The worst thing is they're watching this and they're hearing emotions from the news media, and then you add your own emotions and your own biases and reactions, that makes them think towards one side or the other," Shah said.

"It is best to be neutral and be factual. We don't need to start blaming in front of kids. We don't need to start gossiping in front of kids because if they're going to hear this, they're going to do the same," Shah continued.

Reassure kids that they are safe in their homes and in their

neighborhoods, he added, and that "this incident does not make the country unsafe, does not make going outside unsafe."

At the same time, Shah said that it is important that children understand that the riot in the U.S. Capitol was illegal and that the participants could face consequences from law enforcement.

"Just as you saw in the pictures, some people were actually having fun. We cannot convey that message," Shah said. "There is no fun in this. There is no accomplishment in this. This is a wrongful act, and this is to be punished and this is to be stopped, because otherwise there would be no law and order in this country."

More information: The American Psychiatric Association has advice for [coping after disaster](#).

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