Here are some suggestions that might help you deal with the increase in violence. Feel free to take what works and leave behind what doesn’t. Further down is a care sheet for when your community has experienced a mass casualty or hate event.

1. It’s okay to be deeply impacted by the violence around us. Knowing that people died or were hurt by violence may have an impact on sleep, how we feel, and well-being—that’s normal. It means you’re a human being.
2. Maybe you’re not feeling as productive or as positive. Why shouldn’t the violence we’re exposed to have an impact? It’s okay for it to have an impact. It is often meant as an act of terror, so it’s natural to feel worried and fearful.
3. When communities are impacted by violence, there’s often an urge to leave flowers, crosses, and stuffed animals in makeshift shrines. For those outside the community, there are often no gathering places to come together in grief or to say a prayer. Perhaps think of a way for you, your friends, colleagues, and your neighborhood to do a joint action if that would help. Maybe leave it open to those who would like to join but add no pressure for those who don’t feel like it would help. Everyone is different.
4. There are many actions people might consider such as writing in a journal or doing artwork. Don’t worry about it being good or not. These activities sometimes help people when there are lots of complex and layered emotions. If you have a garden, you can plant something in remembrance. You can call on your elected officials to tell them your thoughts. You can contribute to a cause for those impacted by violence.
5. We can change the way we are with one another, to acknowledge that these are difficult times, and some people may be feeling very impacted. We can begin conversations and messages by checking-in and do this out of respect for all that people can be feeling and going through.
6. In our workplaces, we can think if there are ways to make sure those heavily impacted by violence get the care they need, knowing that violence is common and knowing that it leaves scars.
7. In our homes some people may have a need to keep up with the news, some may want to talk about it, some may want to be more quiet and discuss it less. It’s important to respect how different people are trying to cope. Show care with each other.
8. Try and stay with the kinds of coping and stress relief that are healthy for you and those around you.
9. In our own lives we can think about whether the violence around us means we need to make changes. Perhaps it means getting more mental healthcare, it might mean spending more time with people you cherish. It can mean making sure you eat well and get enough rest because the stress is taking a toll on you. It might mean making sure you save time to do things that help you unwind and feel better.
10. High violence means that it’s hard to feel relaxed and safe in everyday activities. It’s okay if you feel you want to modify what you do to try and stay safer.
11. For many, violence is not the only stressor. People can be sick, they may be worried about making ends meet, or how they and their families will cope with the increase in natural disasters. Acknowledge how much is going on so you can have more compassion for yourself and those around you.
12. If your work exposes you to trauma and adversity, remember that it’s okay to also get professional help, no one is immune.
13. Adversity can take a physical toll. If you’ve got health issues, give yourself the best chance of these issues not getting worse by getting regular medical care.
14. It’s often good to remind oneself that it doesn’t have to be this way. There are many places with far less violence. We can commit ourselves to working towards that goal.

When your community has been impacted by a mass casualty event, or hate event

Many communities around the world have been traumatized by mass shootings or other acts of terror and hate. Before it happens, it’s something you read about, perhaps it heightens your anxiety and causes grief, maybe you have anger or wonder why it had to happen. When it happens in your community, many challenges may occur in the aftermath. The media will likely come to your town, you may have lost a friend or had a near brush with death, you may grieve the loss of safety you felt, or be angry that loved ones and community members had to go through what is for most, a life-changing event. Perhaps there’s a sense of frustration, or maybe the exacerbation of worry, depression, or anxiety.

Here are some things that might be helpful:

1. If the media asks you about your experience, feel free to decline to talk with them if you don’t feel ready or comfortable with being interviewed.
2. Everyone’s history is different, so expect that violence will bring up different feelings for different people.
3. Use care when explaining to children what happened; they need to feel protected and safe, and this coincides with a moment in time when you may be feeling the least safe and protected.
4. Little children who don’t have an idea of death and violence yet may need to be closer, cry, act younger than their years, or ask a lot of questions. They may be distraught by your distress and not sure what has happened, why, and how to feel about it.
5. People may have vastly different needs in the aftermath; some may want to be alone for a while, others may want to talk about their experience, or might want to simply be with a close friend or family member. Cope in ways that aren’t harmful to your health and long-term well-being. Violence takes enough away, we don’t have to add to it.
6. If what occurred has negatively impacted the way you parent, how you are with your partner, or how you do your job, think about getting mental healthcare from someone who understands trauma care.
7. News of mass casualty events or hate events are spread on social media, along with misinformation, rumors, trolling, denial of the event, and malicious posts. If you can, extricate yourself from this because you don’t need the added turmoil this can cause. This is a form of victimizing victims.
8. For some survivors, there will be interviews with police, funerals to plan, funerals to attend, and sometimes the emergence of litigation. This can be extremely stressful. Take care of your health, tell those you’re interacting with how you’re doing so they know. Make sure you voice your need for time and privacy so that where it’s possible to have it, you can have some.
9. If your neighborhood is close, do a check-in, and see what kind of events might be useful, play it by ear and be flexible.
10. If a person has been injured, it’s common to tell the person that they’re lucky to be alive, but they may not feel lucky. They may be in pain, have new disabilities, experience trauma, and feel very unlucky. Here’s an alternative: “*I’m so glad that you survived*.”
11. Many people have the silent scars from past trauma, or they may be vulnerable to trauma, so use care with each other, because what feels right for one person might not be good for another.
12. In the long aftermath, expect that there will good and bad days, and anniversaries or other reminders are often challenging, even years later.
13. If you’ve struggled with mental health problems, substance abuse or substance dependency, consider getting formal help or increasing the formal help you’re receiving. Violence can exacerbate many issues, increasing feelings of hopelessness, meaninglessness, chaos in the world, grief, stress and anxiety.
14. People will heal at different rates and make different meanings from their experience.
15. The place or neighborhood where that event took place may feel different to you for a long time to come.
16. A critical time for people may not be when communities increase solidarity, closeness and empathy; it may be when there is a perception that some people are moving on, and a person feels left behind. They may wonder why they’re not able to be as resilient, or if they are becoming a burden because their pain remains significant.
17. Some counselors specialize in trauma. For peer support, *The Rebels Project* was initiated by students who went through the 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, US. Then they were re-traumatized in the 2012 mass shooting at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. The Rebels was the school mascot of Columbine High School. They have annual events, visit schools that have experienced mass shootings, and offer helpful peer support. Life does not return to the former normal, a new normal is slowly established, and they understand that process. Other peer support groups are available as well.
18. If you are a first responder, remember to allow yourself to get help too.