



Coping with Fear and Anxiety About Violence: A Guide for College Students

In today's world, news of violence—whether it's happening nearby or on the other side of the globe—can make us feel unsafe and uncertain about the future. Graphic images of attacks, shootings, riots, or tragic mass killings can leave us feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and even fearful. As students, you might also feel especially vulnerable if violence relates to your identity, such as your ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or politics.

Even if you're not directly affected by these events, you may still experience emotional distress. You might find yourself worrying about your safety, the safety of your friends or family, or just the larger uncertainty of living in a world where violence is so widespread. The good news is that there are ways to manage these feelings and regain a sense of control. This article offers practical tips for dealing with anxiety and fear during unsettling times.

How You Might Feel

When violent events happen—whether they're terrorist attacks, police shootings, or hate crimes—it's natural to feel:

- Fear or nervousness
- Anger or frustration
- Anxiety or restlessness
- Worry about your own safety or the future
- Uncertainty about what might happen next
- Helplessness or a sense of being out of control
- Insecurity about your environment
- Concern for your friends, family, and community

As a student, you might feel this anxiety more intensely when you think about whether it's safe to walk across campus, attend public events, or even travel home for the weekend. It's okay to feel unsettled—but it's important to take steps to manage your feelings so you can maintain your mental well-being.



When to Seek Professional Help

It's important to recognize when your feelings of fear or anxiety are becoming overwhelming and are interfering with your daily life. If you find yourself feeling unusually irritable, unable to focus, or if your anxiety is affecting your ability to function as a student or in your personal life, it might be helpful to talk to a counselor or mental health professional.

Most colleges offer counseling services, and many universities have support groups or resources available to help students through tough times. If you're unsure where to start, reach out to a campus mental health center or your academic advisor, they can help connect you to resources.

Managing Feelings of Fear and Anxiety

Experiencing fear or anxiety after acts of violence is normal, but it's crucial to manage those emotions in healthy ways. Here are some strategies you can use to feel more grounded and regain a sense of control:

1. Stay Informed, but Don't Overload

It's important to stay updated on what's happening, but make sure to get your information from reliable sources. Universities often share information about safety protocols and any local threats—so pay attention to their guidance. While it's impossible to predict where violence might strike, staying informed helps you make decisions based on facts rather than fear.

2. Talk to Trusted Friends and Mentors

Don't bottle up your feelings. It's okay to talk about your fears with friends, family, or a trusted mentor. Sometimes just expressing what you're feeling can bring relief. You might also want to get involved in organizations or campus groups that focus on peace, justice, or social change. Taking action and feeling part of a positive community can help you feel less powerless.

3. Keep a Balanced Perspective

The media can be overwhelming, and it's easy to jump to negative conclusions. While it's important to stay informed, make sure you balance the tough news with hope. Focus on the good around you—people who help, communities coming together, and positive actions that promote safety and peace.

4. Take Care of Your Physical Health

Your mental and physical health are closely connected, so it's important to take care of your body:

- Eat regularly and make healthy food choices.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine as these can increase anxiety and disrupt your sleep.
- Exercise regularly to release stress and improve your mood.
- Stick to a sleep routine. Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep a night, as poor sleep can heighten anxiety.

Need assistance?

At TELUS Health Student Support, we're always here to help.



5. Practice Stress-Relief Techniques

Find relaxation techniques that work for you. You could try:

- Yoga or mindfulness exercises.
- Going for a walk around campus or in nature.
- Listening to music that calms or inspires you.
- Meditation or deep breathing exercises. (Many apps and online resources can guide you through this.)

6. Limit Your Exposure to Disturbing News

While it's important to stay informed, too much exposure to distressing news can increase anxiety. Try to limit your news intake to a certain time of day—perhaps once in the morning or once in the evening. On social media, unfollow accounts or mute feeds that frequently share upsetting content. If you find that news triggers intense anxiety, take breaks from it for your mental health.

7. Create a Calming Routine Before Bed

Violent or distressing media can make it harder to unwind at night. If you're watching TV, avoid suspenseful or action-packed shows just before bed. Instead, opt for something light, like a comforting series, or listen to soothing music or podcasts.

8. Surround Yourself with Positive, Supportive People

Spending time with people who lift you up can help alleviate anxiety. Be mindful of the energy of the people around you. If certain friends or groups increase your anxiety, it's okay to take a step back and spend time with people who provide calm and support.

9. Practice Self-Compassion

It's normal to feel scared or anxious during uncertain times. Be kind to yourself and recognize that you're doing the best you can in a tough situation. When you treat yourself with compassion, you're more likely to bounce back from stressful moments and find ways to cope more effectively.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help and take steps to care for yourself. College can be stressful on its own, and adding the anxiety of violence and uncertainty can make it feel even harder. But by taking small, deliberate steps, you can regain a sense of control and make it through these challenging times with resilience.