Coping with the Orlando Tragedy

The UMD Counseling Center staff acknowledges that many University of Maryland students, staff, and faculty are deeply affected by the mass shooting at Pulse, the gay nightclub in Orlando. Some in our community may be struggling with difficult feelings that are common reactions to traumatic events. These feelings may include anger, sadness, grief, and hopelessness. Viewing media coverage of the Orlando shooting bring very intense feelings to some people while others experience a numbing of emotions.

The Counseling Center will provide unscheduled walk-in appointments to members of the campus community who wish to speak about the Orlando shooting in confidence with a counselor. Walk-in sessions are available during our usual business hours, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The Counseling Center is open on Wednesdays until 9 p.m. You will be asked to complete brief intake surveys prior to meeting with a counselor.

Many LGBTQ individuals live lives of hypervigilance as a result of being physically, verbally, and psychologically attacked or bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Events like the mass murder in Orlando could trigger traumatizing memories that may impede individuals’ functioning. Survivors of harassment and bullying may question their responses, retreat into shame, act out in maladaptive ways, or attempt to ignore what they experience, all of which may lead to more suffering.

Temporary impairments to daily functioning may appear as anxiety, depressed mood, difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite, sleep difficulties, nightmares, or social isolation. These symptoms can be expected to diminish with time. We encourage you to consider the following strategies for coping with trauma in the coming days.

• Give yourself permission to feel the way you do.
• Talk with others whom you trust.
• Identify community resources that will benefit you individually.
• Get as much rest as possible.
• Eat regularly.
• Keep a regular schedule, if possible.
• Practice deep breathing.
• Avoid using alcohol or drugs to self-soothe.
• Exercise.
• Talk with a mental health professional or clergy if your reactions become overwhelming.

Scheduled appointments at the Counseling Center can be made by calling (301) 314-7651 or by visiting Shoemaker Building. When the Counseling Center is closed, after-hours crisis counseling is available by calling (301) 314-7651.

Additional Resources