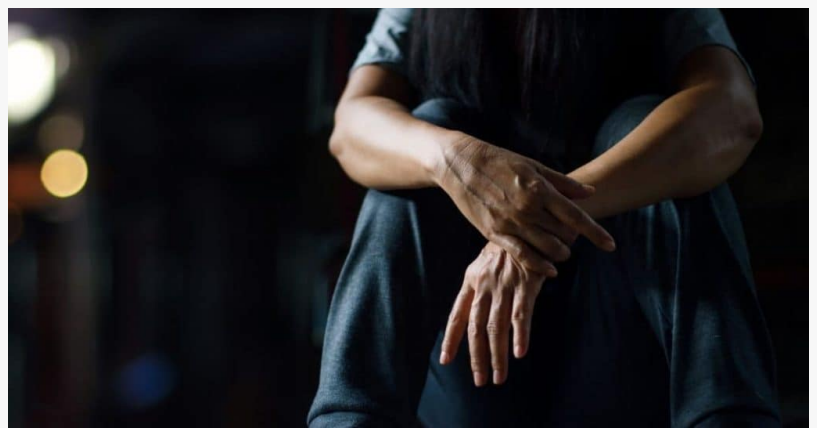


Mental Health And Mass Shootings Correlation

The problems with mental health and mass shootings can impact whole communities and the country at large. It may cause PTSD to people who..

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Mental Health and Mass Shootings Issues



The problems with mental health and mass shootings can cause a collective trauma to communities.

In the U.S., popular and political discourse frequently focuses on the causal impact of mental illness in the aftermath of mass shootings. Evidence

strongly suggests that mass shooters are often mentally ill and socially marginalized. Enhanced psychiatric attention may well prevent particular crimes. Mass shootings often shed light on the need for more investment in mental health support networks or improved state laws and procedures regarding gun access. [1]

“

The sad reality is those mass shootings are more commonplace in the US every year. As a result, we are anticipating a growing need for PTSD awareness, treatment, and support for survivors.”

Alexandra Korotkevich

The death toll of mass shootings has risen sharply, particularly in the last decade. In the 1970s, mass shootings claimed eight lives per year. From 2010 to 2019, the average was 51 deaths per year. Mass shootings are often blamed on mental health issues in public discourse. But the research shows the role of mental illness in mass shootings is complicated, not clear-cut.

Mental health issues were common among those who engaged in mass shootings, with psychosis playing a minor

role in nearly one-third of the cases but a primary part 10% of the time. [2] Suicidality was found to be a strong predictor of the perpetration of mass shootings.

Of all mass shooters in The Violence Project database, 30% were suicidal prior to the shooting. An additional 39% were suicidal during the shooting. In terms of past trauma, 31% of persons

who perpetrated mass shootings were found to have experiences of severe childhood trauma, and over 80% were in crisis. [2]

At the same time, reports of the problems with mental health and mass shootings have plagued the news for the last few weeks. Even counselors with advanced training can become overwhelmed by the intensity of these tragic events. Although people are resilient and often bounce back after difficult times, these events nearly constantly interrupt everyone's sense of order and safety.

Millions of people have been directly and indirectly affected by disasters and mass violence, yet the vast majority recover from any stress reactions they experience. However, at the same time, some survivors will develop psychological disorders such as major depression, generalized anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Mental Health Consequences of Mass Shootings

The amount and nature of exposure to the event are highly linked to the risk of future [mental health problems](#), such that injury and life threats, as well as proximity to the violence, are most predictive of the likelihood of distress, difficulty functioning, and potential psychological impairment, even up to 10 years after the event.

Those directly encountering the event will feel a more lasting impact, followed by those in close contact with immediate survivors. For example, in one review of literature, in the first year after a disaster, the prevalence of PTSD ranged between 30% and 40% among direct victims. In contrast, between 10% and 20% of rescue workers and 5 to 10% of the general population were similarly impacted. [3]

Specific to mass shootings, below are all have been found to increase the [risk for PTSD](#), depression, and anxiety disorders following the mental health consequences of mass shootings:



The problems with mental health and mass shootings can impact whole communities and the country at large.



The problems with mental health and mass shootings instill widespread fear, in part because of their seeming randomness and unpredictability.

Guilt and resentment
Insecurity
Anxiety sensitivity
Beliefs that events are random and uncontrollable
Pre-existing lack of social support
Contemplating and avoidant coping styles
Punitive attitudes toward crime

Dealing with Trauma After a Mass Shooting

People can experience a wide range of emotions before and after a disaster or traumatic event such as mass shootings. There's no right or wrong way to feel. However, it's important to find healthy ways to cope when these events happen. Below are the tips shared by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration [4] you may apply to yourself to cope with mental health and mass shootings.

Eating a healthy diet, avoiding the use of drugs and alcohol, and getting regular exercise can reduce stress and anxiety. Activities as simple as taking a walk, stretching, and deep breathing can help relieve stress.

Limit your consumption of news. The endless replay of news stories about a traumatic event can increase stress and anxiety and make some people relive the event over and over. Lessen the amount of news you watch and/or listen to, and immerse yourself in relaxing activities to help you heal.

Get enough "good" sleep. Some people have problems falling asleep after a traumatic event or wake up throughout the night. If you have trouble sleeping, only go to bed when you are ready to sleep, avoid using cell phones or laptops, and avoid drinking caffeine at least one hour before bed. If you wake up and can't fall back to sleep, try writing what's on your mind in a journal or on a sheet of paper.

Establish and maintain a routine. Try to eat meals at regular times and put yourself on a sleep schedule to ensure a sufficient amount of rest. Include a positive activity in your schedule that you can look forward to each day or week. Schedule exercise into your daily routine as well, if possible.

Understand there will be changes. Disasters such as mass shootings can destroy homes, schools, and places of business and worship and disrupt the lives of people in affected areas for a long time. Sometimes, people lose loved ones or experience physical and mental injuries that may last a lifetime. Some people may also experience a temporary or permanent loss of employment. For children, attending a new or temporary school may result in being separated from peers, or after-school activities may be disrupted.

Anxiety About Mass Shootings

During the impact phase, affected individuals and communities experience a sense of threat, shock, fear, helplessness or powerlessness, guilt, and anxiety. Some people react disorganizedly, which may occur temporarily or extend into the post-disaster period. This may manifest in people standing in harm's way or wandering aimlessly, seemingly out of touch with their surroundings. Contrarily, others may be energized and activated to help others and respond in a focused, efficient manner.

After days and weeks following mass violence in which there is a reckoning with what has occurred, people are initiating to assess the damage to homes and communities. A full range of adverse emotional, mental, social, and physical reactions may occur, but they may not predict long-term outcomes. Reactions may include: [5]

Numbness

Denial or shock

Confusion

Feeling stunned or overwhelmed

Anxiety

Grief reactions to loss

Flashbacks and nightmares

Anger

Despair

Sadness

Hopelessness

Mass Shooting Anxiety

Those who are most at risk for developing mental health problems such as anxiety disorders and PTSD following mass shootings are the people who were closest to the event. If you or a loved one were present during the mass violence or knew any of the people killed, you may be at higher risk for more severe or longer-lasting distress or trouble functioning. If you are distressed or incapable of functioning well, consider seeking help. Talking to someone else can also be especially helpful.

There is no definitive timeline for recovering from an event as intense and potentially traumatic as a mass shooting. [6] Depending on how close you were to the occurrence, it may take a long time to feel better.

PTSD After Mass Shooting

According to the American Psychological Association, although mass shootings account for only a tiny fraction of the country's gun deaths, they are uniquely disturbing because they happen

without warning in the most routine of places: schools, churches, office buildings, and concert venues.

The National Center for PTSD estimates that 28% of people who have witnessed a mass shooting develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and about a third develop acute stress disorder.

[7]

Mental Health Programs

Policymaking at the interface of gun violence prevention and mental illness should be based on epidemiologic data concerning risk to improve the effectiveness, feasibility, and fairness of policy initiatives.

There are also competent and caring professionals available who can effectively treat the most common responses to the issues of mental health and mass shootings, like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and complicated grief. The most effective treatments give you tools to problem-solve, mourn and make sense of what happened, deal with numbness or intense emotions, and foster resilience. It is a good idea to try meeting with a mental health professional at least once. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will feel better.

The problems with mental health and mass shootings instill widespread fear, in part because of their seeming randomness and unpredictability.

For those in need of more intensive services, research supports trauma-focused psychotherapy for PTSD as an effective treatment following a disaster.

Trauma-focused psychotherapy is a broad term that refers to several specific psychotherapies for PTSD. "Trauma-focused" means that the treatment focuses on the memory of the traumatic event and its meaning.

Trauma-focused psychotherapies use different techniques to help you process the issues of mental health and mass shootings or your traumatic experience. For example, some involve visualizing, talking, or thinking about the traumatic memory. Others focus on changing unhelpful beliefs about the trauma. They usually last about 8-16 sessions.

Because of the unpredictable nature of these types of disasters, it's normal for people to experience emotional distress. Feelings such as overwhelming anxiety, trouble sleeping, and other depression-like symptoms are common responses to incidents of mass violence such as mass shootings. Other signs of emotional distress related to mental health and mass shootings may include:

Feeling numb or like nothing matters

Feeling helpless or hopeless

Worrying a lot of the time; feeling guilty but not sure why

Feeling like you have to keep busy

Excessive smoking, alcoholism, or using drugs (including prescription drug addiction)

Symptoms of PTSD and distress may appear before, during, and after such an event and may manifest in the hours, days, weeks, months, or even years after they occur. These are just a few warning signs. Learn more about the risk factors for PTSD and addiction to incidents of mass violence and other disasters.

Both PTSD and substance abuse have a complex impact on the brain. Therefore, it's crucial to treat both at the same time to undo this damage. For people with PTSD, substance use is not the answer to removing distress. [8] [Specialized PTSD treatment](#) and substance abuse programs can help people cope.

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