



Student and Community Counseling Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Sexual Assault in the News Cycle **Tips on Managing Distress**

The recent wave of media coverage of the Supreme Court Justice hearings and the topic of sexual assault is leading many people to experience strong reactions ranging from disgust, rage, sadness and a feeling of powerlessness. The nature of the testimonies and denials in front of a national government committee can naturally elicit these reactions. This has been fueled, exacerbated by recent comments from politicians. These reflect, in great part, the important struggles that survivors have faced...the “believability” of the victim; the negative consequences for speaking out; the re-traumatization of victims; the heightening sense of power and privilege differentials; and the abuse that can stem from this, etc.

We want to acknowledge the potential triggering of trauma for many in our community, but especially for survivors. The reactions can be dramatically different, but all are valid.

These triggering events can affect a person’s sense of safety in the world. It can lead to struggling to understand how such violence could occur, and the sometimes incomprehensible reactions of others. There are a wide variety of emotions that people can experience, and can include anything from a sense of shock, grief and sorrow, to fear and anger. One can find oneself feeling numb, apathetic, or disillusioned. There may be changes in sleep, appetite, ability to focus, or memory.

Having strong reactions to such events makes sense. It is not pathological, and these reactions can be shared with many other people. What people can be feeling is not about a personal weakness; this is about a community and political experience that may be felt on a deeply personal level.

Should you find yourself struggling, there are things that you can do that can help:

- Active coping is virtually always better than doing nothing.

- Express your sadness, anger, and fear or whatever you're feeling.
- Seek support from friends and loved ones.
- Take care of yourself; sleep, eat well, exercise, engage your passions.
- Pay attention to the temptation to isolate.
- Analyze negative messages about victimization and resist them.
- If you feel it would be helpful, seek support from the resources available on campus

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