

Dealing with bad world news

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It can sometimes feel like bad news follows us around. Phones, social media and WiFi make news spread like wildfire, and when something bad breaks, it's tough to unplug. It's totally normal to feel overwhelmed by the news, especially when good news stories often seem hard to come by. So, if you're feeling down about the world, we've got some tips for you.

This might help if:

- you've been feeling overwhelmed by the news
- you don't know how to react to bad world news
- you're finding it hard to disconnect from the media.

Reacting to bad world news

There are endless kinds of news stories that can make you feel really down. Some common reactions to bad world news include feeling:

- anxious and worried
- depressed and sad
- helpless
- confused
- angry.

Why does bad world news affect us?

On a planet with about seven billion people, it's really easy to feel disconnected. But when a world tragedy strikes, feelings of worry, sadness and grief are more common than you'd think.

A part of this effect has to do with how easily accessible information is today. Even if you try to avoid bad world news, it can be almost impossible when you factor in how dependent we are on being online.

Our personal reactions to bad world news are also based on biology. When we see upsetting information, our bodies react by releasing stress hormones to deal with the negative emotions.

How can I cope with bad world news?

There are a few things you can do to help.

1. Learn to switch off

It's easier said than done, of course, but taking a break from social media can do a lot to help tackle the effects of bad world news. Nearly 80% of Facebook users will see shared news articles on their Facebook feeds, and with the media's emphasis on negative news, it's very easy to be overwhelmed by your time on social media.

Take breaks from time to time, especially if you notice yourself feeling down because of the things you're seeing on social media. Replace the time you'd normally spend online with something offline, such as reading books or magazines, talking to your friends or playing video games.

2. Try to understand why it's upsetting you

Sometimes world news can hit close to home. Whether it's a tragedy in your family's country of origin, or the death of a person you really admired, world news can sometimes feel very personal. If what you're feeling is more than just a sense of empathy for those affected by a tragedy, it's worth speaking about it to someone you trust. Chat to your friends, family or even a counsellor about how the news is affecting you. The simple act of talking can sometimes make you feel a whole lot better.

3. Accept your level of control

One of the biggest things about bad world news is that the scale of a tragedy and the distance we observe it from can make us feel helpless. When something bad happens, our immediate response may be to ask ourselves what we can do to help, and how we can put an end to it.

While there are usually things, big and small, that a person can do to help a situation, we can't stop it entirely on our own. Learning to understand how much influence we can have over something is a very important step in reducing the stress we might feel on hearing bad news.

We're not saying that you shouldn't try to help. In fact, helping out can often make us feel better while doing something positive for the world. But we need to understand what the most helpful way to contribute to a cause is, and learn to accept the limits. Read more about how acceptance can help you cope with things out of your control.

What can I do now?

Get some support on the ReachOut Forums. Learn more about seeking professional help. Take a break from social media for a while and engage with some real world stuff that you can control.