



# MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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**For Immediate Release**  
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## SCHOOL VIOLENCE: DEALING WITH STRESS

**DENVER, Colo.** - The Mental Health Association of Colorado (MHAC) encourages parents, teachers and students to be aware that feelings and emotions may be close to the surface in light of the recent tragedy on the campus of Virginia Tech. Some students may experience the stresses more acutely because of the recent anniversary of Columbine and the shooting last fall at Platte Canyon High School.

### Signs of Stress:

- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about the event
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and depression
- Feeling powerless
- Changes in eating patterns; loss of appetite or overeating
- Excessive crying
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Difficulty sleeping or falling asleep
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs

### Tips for Coping

It's normal to have difficulty managing your feelings after major tragedies. Because everyone experiences stress differently, don't compare yourself with others around you or judge other people's reactions and emotions. Here are some tips for coping with stress:

- **Talk about it.** By talking with others about the event, you can relieve stress and realize that others share your experience and feelings.
- **Spend time with friends and family.** They can help you through this tough time. If your family lives outside the area, stay in touch by phone if possible. If you have children, encourage them to share their feelings and concerns with you.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get as much rest and exercise as possible. Try to continue your religious practices, or centering activities.
- **Take one thing at a time.** Break jobs up into doable tasks. Complete that task first and then move on to the next one. Completing each task will give you a sense of accomplishment and make things seem less overwhelming.
- **Avoid drugs and excessive drinking.** Drugs and alcohol may seem to help you feel better, but in the long run they generally create additional problems that compound the stress you're already feeling.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** If your stress is so strong it gets in the way of your daily life, talk with someone. Don't try to go it alone. You can start with a trusted friend, relative or minister. You may want to talk with a mental health professional to discuss how well you

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are coping with recent events. This could be especially important for people who had existing mental health problems or those who've survived past trauma. You could also join a support group. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

**For More Information:**

For a free and confidential mental health screening, go on-line to [www.mhacolorado.org](http://www.mhacolorado.org).

**Local Community Resources:**

**Mental Health Association of Colorado**

1385 S. Colorado Blvd. Ste. 610, Denver CO 80222

720-208-2220 or 800-456-3249 ■ [www.mhacolorado.org](http://www.mhacolorado.org)

**Creating Caring Communities (Bully-Proofing Your School program)**

1385 S. Colorado Blvd. Ste. 610, Denver CO 80222

720-941-0700 ■ [www.bullyproofing.org](http://www.bullyproofing.org)

**Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado**

1385 S. Colorado Blvd. Ste. 610, Denver CO 80222

720-208-2220 ■ [www.suicideprevention-colorado.org](http://www.suicideprevention-colorado.org)

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**About the Mental Health Association of Colorado**

The Mental Health Association of Colorado, the Colorado affiliate of the National Mental Health Association, is the catalyst and voice for the Colorado mental health movement. Through Education, Advocacy and Outreach, we provide resources to Coloradans affected by the entire spectrum of mental health issues.

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