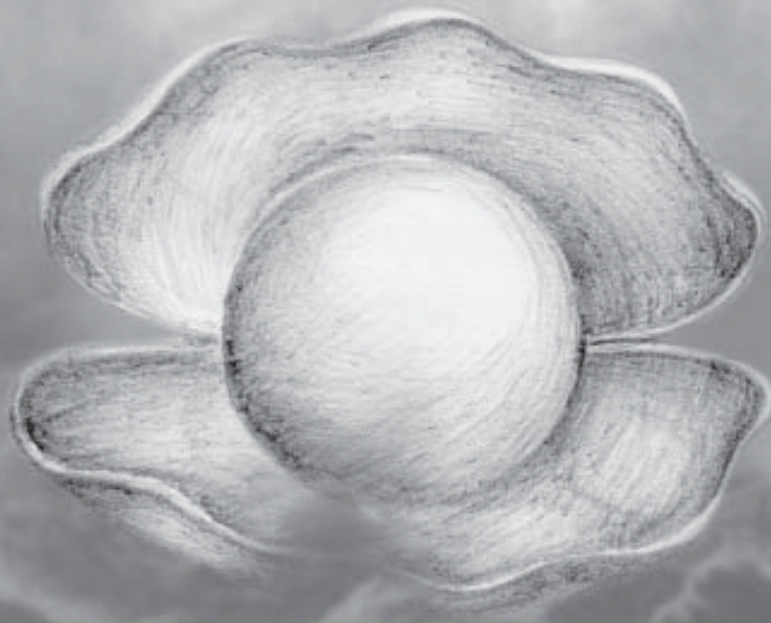


# RIOTS



**PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE**  
*for*  
**INDIVIDUALS**



INFORMATION MANUAL 1

# RIOTS

## PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE *for* INDIVIDUALS

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INFORMATION MANUAL 1

## **RIOTS**

PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE  
for INDIVIDUALS

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Dedicated to  
the people of the 2002  
Gujarat Riots

# PREFACE

Riots pose a challenge to the total community. Everyone who is exposed to the riots experience disruption of their life to varying degrees. Everyone in the community is a survivor. Among the survivors, the most affected are people whose lives are disrupted more severely by the disaster. This includes those who have lost their home, experienced violence, lost their family members and community.

For too long, psychosocial consequences have been neglected as a part of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. In India, starting with the Bhopal disaster in 1984, there has been a gradual acceptance of the need for psychosocial care. Long-term studies of psychological problems of disaster were studied in the Bhopal population as well as among the survivors of the Marathwarda earthquake. Both of them concluded that there is higher amount of emotional and physical illnesses even years after the disaster.

For the first time following the Orissa Super cyclone, a programme of psychosocial care with community level workers (Snehakarmis) was implemented. This intervention demonstrated the nature of the needs of the vulnerable groups, the possibility of community level workers to provide care and the effectiveness of such care. In a way, the Orissa experience established a new approach to psychosocial care.

Every disaster is similar and different in a number of ways. The riots of Gujarat and what it means for the population of Gujarat and the approach to psychosocial care are the scope of the current manual. This information booklet differs from earlier efforts. It outlines the anger, anguish and betrayal felt by the survivors and the normalisation of their emotions. The approaches outlined are totally based on extensive field work, the initial experiences of the Aman Pathiks in providing care and the observations of mental health professionals to provide support and supervision.

In rebuilding of survivors, INDIVIDUALS have a very important role. It is initiatives taken by all the people that will result in the recovery of individuals and the community. It is recognised that the Gujarat Riots have impacted nearly all the population in varying degrees. The survivors who went through violence are the worst affected. This booklet addresses their needs and presents strategies that can be adopted to gain control over the experience.

The general population of Gujarat is also affected by the riots. Each one of them is a survivor in a different way. A separate information booklet addresses their needs and the measures appropriate to be taken to gain control over their experiences.

The rebuilding of people, reconstruction of not only of shelters and livelihood but of the Human Spirit are the challenge. This information booklet works towards that goal.

We sincerely appreciate the contributions of all of the authors. The Aman Pathiks, the People of Gujarat who shared their personal lives and the Aman Samuday team in Gujarat.

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**THE AUTHORS**

2002

# UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION YOU ARE IN

## BACKGROUND

Gujarat was torn apart on 27 February 2002 by possibly the most brutal savage sectarian violence since Independence. This convulsed the state of Gujarat and left a trail of profound human tragedy. The violence resulted in the death of nearly 1000 persons, many of them women and children. It targeted a large number of women and girls with rape and sexual violence. Many others were injured and disabled. Houses and commercial establishments across the state were looted, destroyed and charred to the ground, resulting in mass destruction of livelihoods and displacement of people. Thousands of people, mostly from the minority community, were rendered homeless. Places of worship of the minority community were specifically targeted.



In the immediate aftermath of this violence, there were at least 1,00,000 women, children and men in the 103 relief camps in Ahmedabad. An estimated 50,000 people were in similar camps across the rest of the state of Gujarat. Having lost everything they once had, people were condemned to live as internal refugees in their own state, often in their own cities. 'The monumental pain, loss, betrayal and injustice suffered during the riots', 'the depth of anger and longing for revenge', 'the wounds may not heal for generations' and 'desperate and depressed', documented in the media reflect the intensity of the psychological scar in the minds of the survivors.

Mastering changes in life situations is part of human existence. However life never bargains for and never prepares people to face such severe adversities. Whenever an individual faces an overwhelming event that is perceived as dangerous and beyond normal coping capacity, the ability to respond adequately is limited temporarily. At that point of time people react in ways which are different from the usual behaviour, which is characterised by disturbing memories of the event, avoidance of experiences that remind of the event, withdrawal, fear and hyper arousal. It is important to understand that these **are normal reactions to an abnormal situation**. The violence in Gujarat was an abnormal situation and in response to that, individuals would be experiencing many reactions which may seem unusual.

Individuals need to understand that:

- these reactions are normal
- most people experience them
- they can master these reactions so that the path to recovery and rehabilitation after a disaster becomes much easier.

**By understanding the process, individuals will not feel overwhelmed by emotions and reactions. Rather, they will be able to work towards adopting effective coping techniques to master the situation.**

This booklet presents information to enable you to understand the reactions you are experiencing after the riots that took place in February to March 2002. It also provides details of what you can do to hasten the recovery process.

Having been through these riots, you would have experienced some personal loss or witnessed suffering of other people. You would have experienced some or all of the things given below:

- **Severe stress and trauma due to the riots**
- **Anger and feelings of revenge against rioters**
- **Sudden displacement**
- **Difficulties of living in the camps**
- **Uncertainty about the future and continuation of threat**
- **Demands of rebuilding personal, family, community life.**



All these can result in feelings of anger, helplessness, depression and frustration. In any disaster the social support system breaks down because everyone is affected by the disaster. So having relatives or friends who could help you through a crisis may be non-existent since they would also have been affected by the riots.

It is perfectly normal to feel angry, hopeless and helpless at such times and you will need assistance from others around you. In order to help yourself get back to a normal life you need to focus on three basic things:

- **Understand the changes you experience in your body and mind as a result of the disaster. This will enable you to cope with them better**

When people face any traumatic event, they experience both emotional and physical reactions. These reactions and feelings are normal responses and occur in most people who face an event that overwhelms them. Acknowledging this will help you understand better the changes experienced and be more comfortable in dealing with what you are experiencing.

■ **Decrease the physical and emotional effects so that you start feeling better**

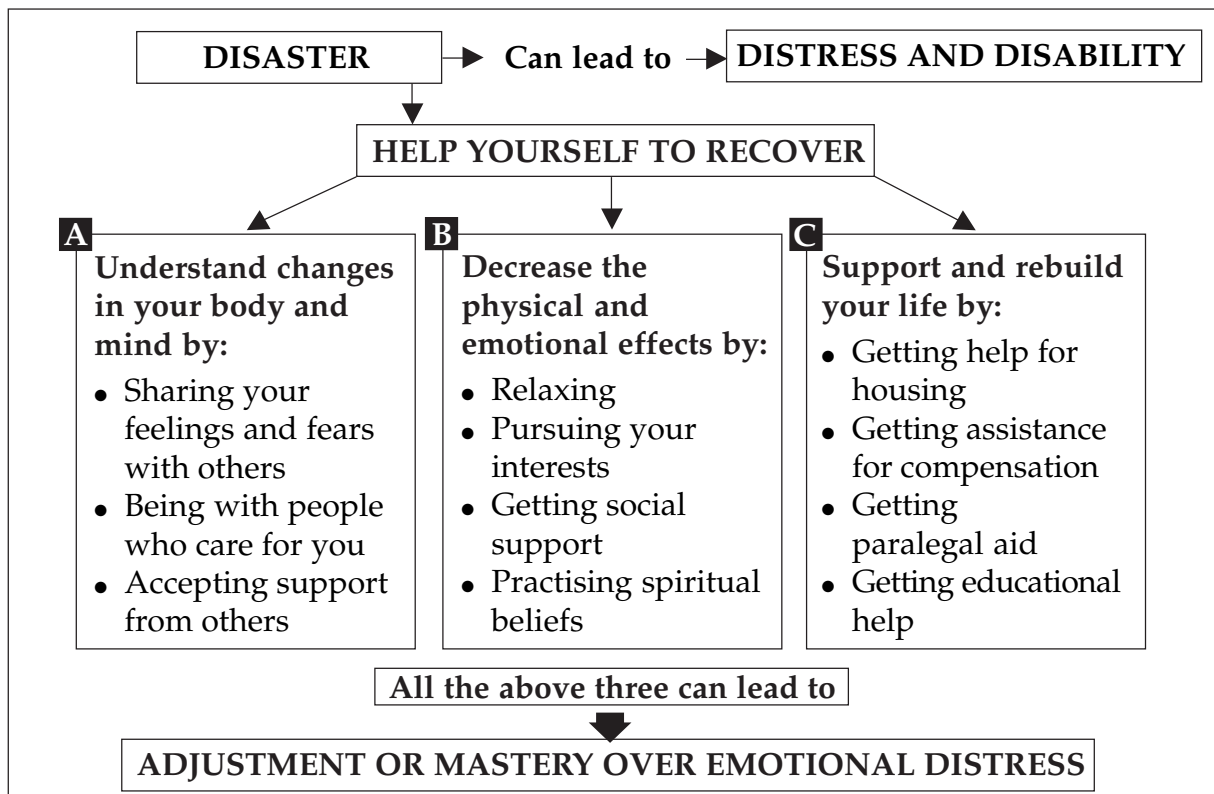
It is well established that sharing of experiences and seeking support decreases emotional stress. Meeting with others and the Aman Pathiks (Community level helpers) regularly, relating to them what you have experienced and how you are currently feeling, will decrease the pressure of the strong emotions within you. Aman Pathiks will help you by listening to your problems, teach you to relax and guide you about some of the effective coping strategies.

■ **Get support to rebuild your life so that you can resume your normal life routines as soon as possible**

The important task of rebuilding your life should start at the earliest and this could be in terms of housing, employment, health etc. For example you may want help with compensation, assistance in paralegal work, practical help like getting forms, someone to accompany you to the offices or help you open a bank account or you may have some medical problems that you need help with. Giving attention to these needs and taking action will help in rebuilding your life. The Aman Pathiks can assist you with information and support in all these areas.

The diagram below captures the recovery process after a disaster and what you can do for yourself to hasten the recovery:

**STRATEGIES TO HANDLE THE EFFECTS OF DISASTER ON YOU**

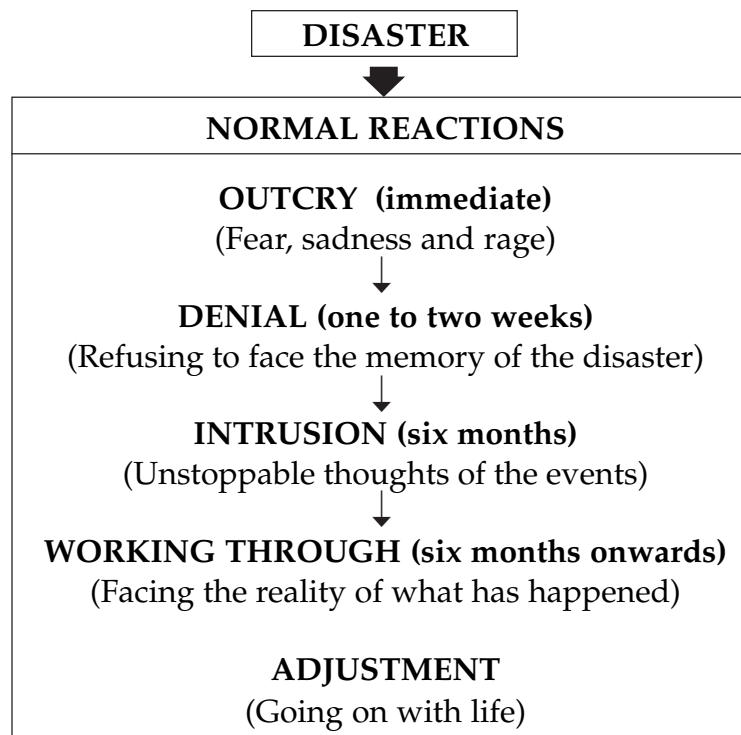


# UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Traumatic experiences cause stress, which is often beyond the coping capacity of an individual. In such situations body and mind react by measures to 'fight' or 'flight'. The reaction leads to symptoms that are manifested in changes in behaviour, bodily experiences and emotional reactions.

This section helps you understand some of these experiences. Understanding the reactions will help you feel more comfortable in dealing with the changes. You must remember that:

- These emotional reactions are normal responses to an abnormal experience
- The reactions are common and experienced by everyone
- Everybody who experiences a disaster is touched by it
- The reactions manifest differently at different periods of time after the disaster
- Rehabilitation and rebuilding is a slow process and takes time.



It is important to recognise and understand these stages of emotional responses so that in course of time you will overcome the intense emotions you are experiencing. For instance, if you have constant thoughts about what happened, you may worry about losing control over your mind or developing some mental breakdown. However, what will make you feel more comfortable with these thoughts is:

- knowing that it is normal to have such thoughts
- that it happens to most people who have had a traumatic experience
- knowing that you will soon feel better.

Some reactions that you could experience are:

### ■ Tension and anxiety

The riots occurred suddenly so that there was no time to think or be prepared. The initial reaction was to run for safety. Fear is common till one reaches safer places. You may still find yourself responding with a sense of fear to each and every sound, smoke or fire, siren or coughing. You feel constantly on vigil for signs of further attacks by the mobs. This can prevent you from sleeping. Sometimes you can become irritable and angry. It is only a protective behaviour, which usually decreases gradually over a period of time (few weeks). This is what other people have experienced:

*"We ran out without even wearing slippers (Aise bhage ki chappal bhi nahin pehne)."*

*"We rang up to find out when a big vehicle could come and pick us up."*

*"We never even understood what was happening, but everyone was fleeing, so we too fled."*

A 14-year-old boy saw his entire family being killed by the rioters. Now if he sees a group of people coming close to him, he feels people are coming to kill him.



*" Lets go from here, they are coming here."*

Mothers talk about children in the community.

*"Children have started wetting their beds."*

A woman shares what happens in the camp.

*"If there is any noise, all of us go running out to see what has happened. Even a small noise gets us tense."*



*"Even now if I hear some noise I get so alarmed as to what is happening. My heart starts racing (Mera dil tez dhadakta hai)."*

### ■ Numbness or shock

You will find it difficult to accept the reality of the magnitude and extent of property loss, death and destruction for a short period. You wish as if nothing has happened. You can have a sense of being paralysed, distant, and removed from one's feelings of grief. You can be numb, or feel like a machine and go through the motions of life without the usual feelings. At the same time, physical symptoms such as confusion and loss of appetite are common. These are some experiences:



*"For a few days I could not even understand as to what has happened (Thode din to samaje mein bhi nahi aaya ki huya kya hai)."*

*"My daughter was so scared that she seemed a little lost for sometime (Yeh, ladki itna dar gai the ki iske hosh khoje hua se the)."*

*"Initially when Ms A came she was in a very bad condition like a dead body. She used to just lie in one corner silently."*

*"That lady just sat in one corner, she lost her young son."*

### ■ Relief among the survivors

After a few days you can feel a sense of joy of having escaped unharmed, having family members safe. Often you feel very happy that you have survived. But at the same time this feeling puzzles and disturbs you. You keep wondering:

- How is it that I am feeling happy and relieved instead of feeling depressed when I have 'lost' a near and dear person?
- What right do I have to survive when others have suffered so much of loss?
- How is it that I am feeling happy and relieved instead of feeling depressed when I have 'lost' a near and dear person?
- Why was I unable to save the lives of my dear ones?
- Why did we have to suffer the killings and tortures?
- Should I take revenge?



Do not feel guilty about feeling so. It is a normal feeling among survivors.

### ■ Anger

You will feel angry with rioters and want to take revenge. Anger comes from your feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. You can have feelings of resentment towards God or towards life in general for the injustice. You may ask questions like

“What had I done?” “Why me?” “How could they do it”? Slowly anger towards the people who have brought you to this state will emerge. It can be a mild feeling or a raging irrational emotion. You will talk or hear others talking of revenge. As time goes by, for most people the feelings of revenge reduces. For some people this can re-emerge when they return to their homes and the memories of it all come back in a flash:

A young boy talks of revenge:

*“They killed my father I will kill theirs.”*

A mother who saw two of her children aged 6 and 7 killed and burnt in front of her:

*“What had the children done to anyone? They were so innocent? (un masoomo ne kya bigada tha kisika, mujhe le jate) They could have taken me.”*

A teenage girl expresses her frustration and talks about revenge:

*“You either get those policemen and I will take care of them or get me my mother back.”*

A husband talks about his wife’s changed behaviour:

*“My wife for small matters gets very angry with the children.”*

A woman while relating her experiences became very angry and started shouting:

*“Tell me what would your situation be if you were in my position, what wrong did we do?”*

A man expresses violent thoughts:

*“Next time this happens either I will be in jail or I will be dead.”*

A woman expresses her thoughts about the situation:

*“What do you think these children who have seen so much of killing will become when they grow up? They will become terrorists.”*

## ■ Guilt

You can feel guilty and regretful of your actions or reactions.

“I should have done more”; “If only I had known this will happen, I would have done something”, etc., are words that come to the minds of many people. The fact that you felt happy at being saved will also cause distress. This is what some people have said:

*“I could not do anything to save them (Mein kuch nahin kar paya unko bachane ke liye)”.*

A woman talking about her daughter-in-law who had gone home for delivery and died in the riots along with her entire family:

*“I should have got her back to my home; at least she would have been alive.”*



A woman who saw women being molested and harassed but could not help, expresses her helplessness, sadness and guilt:

*"When the rioters (tola) came I was hiding with other women. They started cutting up people, burning homes and doing bad things to women. We were watching but could not do anything. I really think about that time and feel bad."*

An old man expressing helplessness and guilt.

*"The girls in my colony used to call me 'chacha' uncle. I saw the same children being raped, they called out to me for help but I just hid and sat there, I could not do anything."*

### ■ Depression and emptiness

After the period of shock passes and anger has been reduced, you start feeling sad and hopeless. **You suddenly experience a sense of great loss.** Sadness, confusion, irritation, anger and feelings of wanting to be alone can follow. Sleep and appetite would be disturbed; there would be lack of energy and concentration. You also feel like crying for small things. Feelings of loneliness, emptiness, isolation, and self-pity also surface during this phase. Some people have said:

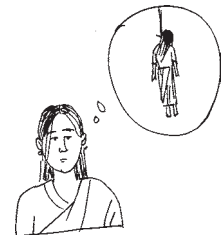
A middle-aged lady talks about how she is helpless she felt when she came to this camp:

*"All my family is gone what do I have to live for."*

*"At times I feel I should have gone too."*

*"I remember how it was earlier (Sab yaad aata hai phele jaisa tha).*

*"Now we are just living in name." (Ab hum sirf naam ke liye ji rahein hain)*



*"I have lost everything that I had saved." (Mera to saab kuch lut gaya, sab joe banaya tha)*

An aged man talks about sleep problems.

*"If I start thinking about something, the whole night I lie awake."*

*"The food here in the camp is not nice."*

*"My days just pass by. I do not know what to do."*

*"There is nothing much to do here, just eat and then sit around."*

*"When we came here we started feeling like beggars, having to sit in the queue for tea or food in the camp. We did not feel like eating. We just came here like orphans (lawaris) wearing whatever clothes we had on."*



A father talks about his loss:

*"I had two daughters, both were killed in this riots. They were raped and then burnt. I have not been able to get the postmortem report till now. I have not got my compensation money."*

*"Half my head aches (Aadha sir dukhta hai) I feel like just lying down."*

*"Earlier I used to be able to do a lot of work, now without doing much I feel very tired, my body aches, I cannot put my mind to anything." ('mera maan nahin lagta')*

A man who used to sell items on a pushcart talks about his loss and the physical symptoms:

*"I have lost everything I do not know what will happen in the future. I have an ache in my back and my arms. The medicines that the doctor gave do not seem to really help."*



A woman expresses her loss and feeling of helplessness:

*"I lost my home as well as my married son's home. Both homes have been looted. Now we have no support. Only these camp people are there for us."*

*"It feels as if we have been reborn; the whole world has changed for us. We have to start all over again."*

*"I do not feel like eating; even when I eat I eat little or nothing at all. (Bhook nahin lagti, kabhi kha liya to khaya nahin to aise hi)."*

#### ■ Reliving the experience

Restlessness, confusion, sleeplessness, repeated experiences of the events and nightmares can come up. Several times you will suddenly remember and re-live the experience; the noisy mobs, burning houses, bloodshed, women shouting and children crying can come back to your mind. Small sounds can trigger these experiences. This can happen more at night and in your dreams. Some people have shared their experiences:

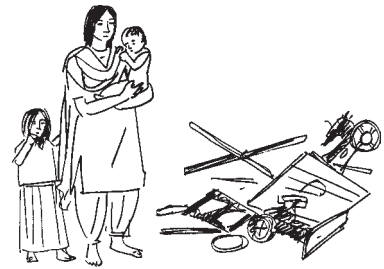


A boy of about 18 who survived recounts what he sometimes feels:

*"At times I cannot even cry, but also cannot hide the pain. I feel so terrible that I cannot even explain. My voice does not come out, I get so scared. Memories of what used to be come back to my mind."*

A woman who used to earn her living by sewing, but now when she hears the whirr of the sewing machine, she screams. It reminds her of the rioters coming and closing in around her house. Loud voices or noises also really upset her:

*"Oh God! Tell them to stop, I cannot take this."*



A young boy saw his family members being killed, burnt alive in front of his eyes. Only his father was saved. At night he gets up crying and remembers the above moment when his brother was being killed and his mother tried to intervene and was also killed:

*"I get up at night suddenly with the image of my mother throwing herself on my brother to save him before they cut her up in two."*

A woman talks about what she witnessed during the riots:

*"I saw the mob, they tortured and harassed the females by stripping them naked, abused them physically and then burned them alive. I do not know why I just feel very tired. I keep getting the same thought in my head again and again."*

*"Even now the memories come to my mind (Abhi bhi yaad aata hai)."*

As time goes by, for most people the above feelings decrease. They start the process of rebuilding their lives, adults get back to work and children restart their educational activities and normal life routines. However it is a normal pattern that all the feelings mentioned above can come back again and again, especially on occasions such as:

- *On special days like birthdays of the loved ones who have been lost*
- *While cooking a mother breaks down while talking of how her child who is no more used to love a particular vegetable*
- *An adolescent boy talked of how he heard a song being played on the radio and suddenly memories of his home came back to him and for a moment he was stunned and could not move*
- *Another woman told us she feels really sad and all the memories of her kitchen and all that she had in it come back to her. She finds it very difficult to cook; she specifically remembers the pressure cooker she used to have; now the food takes so long to cook. It is very frustrating and she does not feel like carrying on with life.*
- *A young boy was mentioning the thing that he misses greatly is the television and how he used to be glued to it. Now even the basic amenities in his house are missing.*
- *A father talks of how at home, only four of them now sit down to a meal. "How can I feel like eating? We lost two children; their thoughts keep coming back to us. I feel very angry."*



These statements demonstrate that all these cited experiences are common emotional reactions seen in all people who have been through a trauma experience. It is important to understand that the reactions are absolutely normal responses. Remember that they can be mastered and overcome over a period of time (see Section III, What will help you recover faster? pp.14–28). There are several self help strategies to practise that can make you feel more comfortable and in control as you go through these experiences.

**The normal responses to a traumatic event change over time and you have to give yourself time to go through those responses.**

For instance, within a few hours of the event and till a few days after the event you feel angry, betrayed, anxious, dazed, a sense of relief and elation, disoriented and guilty. These reactions are short-lived, last for a few days and are experienced by most of the people.

**An 18-year-old girl**

*She lost her mother in the recent riots. Her mother had out of curiosity gone out of the house to see what was happening and was killed in the police firing even though she tried to run and escape the firing. This girl was not able to deal with this loss. Her initial reaction was one of extreme rage and anger. If anyone went to see her or talked about her mother, she would scream and tell them to: “Either get back my mother or get the policemen who killed her and I will take care of them.” She had not cried after she lost her mother.*



**A 20-year-old boy**

*He used to work in a cycle shop owned by his family. On the day of the riots he came home all the way cycling down and witnessed a lot of violence on the way. When he returned he went into high fever from which he did recover. A week later, his father while returning home from work was stabbed to death. On hearing this, the boy again got an attack of fever. He became very quiet and lost all interest in life. He stopped talking and could not sleep well at night.*

**One to six months after the disaster** many people felt very lethargic, did not like to respond to others, had physical symptoms, anxiety, anger, numbness, reliving the event in their mind, are unable to enjoy things in life, etc. About 40–50 per cent of the people have such reactions.

*Now after five months **the 18-year-old girl** is still quite disturbed by the loss of her mother. She has started taking care of the house and cooks and cleans and looks after the family members. This process of getting into some sort of a routine to some extent keeps her busy. However, even now if someone mentions her mother she clams up and does not*



want to respond. She then goes away and silently sobs by herself. But the anger has decreased.

**The 20-year-old boy** has developed speech difficulties. He stopped going for work and stays at home. His hands trembled and he started stammering. He did not talk about losing his father. Instead, he used to talk as if he is still alive although he had himself seen the body of his father. He said he felt very angry at what happened. However, five months later, he is on some medication to help him sleep well. Now, he has returned back to work at least for part of the day and regained his independence to a large extent. His speech is normal and coherent.

**Beyond six months of the disaster** there are some reactions that continue and are seen in about 30 per cent of the people who have been through a traumatic event. This group would feel sad, depressed, guilty, angry, suffer loss of sleep and appetite, become irritable develop suicidal tendencies and get disturbed by whatever reminds them of their loss and actively avoid situations or stimulus that remind them about the traumatic event.

**Some more examples of how individuals reacted to the events at different points of time:**

#### **Within a few hours to a few days of the event**

32-year-old C was dazed and numb for three days. She did not talk to anyone in the camp. On the third day they took her to the mortuary where she was shown her 14-year-old daughter who was killed with a metal pipe. C then burst into inconsolable weeping.

26-year-old D was elated that he was able to bring his wife safely to the relief camp. His elation was short lived as his wife started having labour pains. Seeing her in pain he became very tense, anxious and started abusing people responsible for the riots. The elderly women in the camp joined together and attended to her. Three hours later she gave birth to a baby girl.

68-year-old E strayed out in the melee of riots. During the commotion she had no news of her daughter and grand children. One day she fainted on the road. Someone took her to the Sundaram Nagar relief camp. She was disoriented for the next few days. When her daughter traced her back at the camp, she started communicating slowly.

#### **One to six months after the event**

39-year-old F saw her handicapped son and his friend being tied together and set on fire. She sits in a corner of the camp, clutching his crutches and crying. I loved him so much, not because I sympathise with him but because of his love of everyone around. Can this compensation bring him back? The daughter-in-law by the side keeps comforting her by saying that the boy was very good, and whatever happened should not have been so.

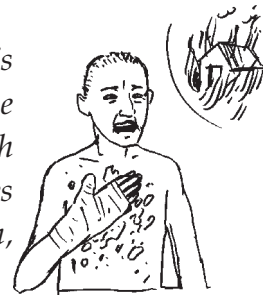
*A 35-year-old woman keeps crying everyday. She does not want to live anymore. She says that her husband had not even allowed her to go out alone; he was so protective. She does not want to leave the charred house. She repeatedly talks of how he used to sit, drink tea, and sleep with the children. She does not know how to carry on her life. Her sister from the neighbouring state is with her and pushes G to prepare food for the kids. She keeps reminding G that she has to live for her two children.*



*A 42-year-old man was stripped of his clothes and beaten. He was hospitalised with fractures. On returning back he avoids going to the circle where he was beaten up. He repeatedly recollects the scene of the mob closing in on him. He now feels guilty and does not want to live this life. His friend has been a little successful in getting him to go at least to the teashop nearby.*

*A 29-year-old woman is unhappy because her husband has lost his job in the printing press where he was working earlier. Though he earns some money from other jobs, she finds happiness is missing in her family life. The mother-in-law keeps telling her that she understands the situation and that good days are ahead, so she must be happy.*

*A 15-year-old boy had sustained a severe burn injury. His mobility is restricted; his face carries a lot of burn scars. He repeatedly asks why he should live with scars on his face. He feels ashamed to sit in the verandah with shorts. The grandfather gives him holy water every time he notices the boy writhing his teeth with anger and pain. He keeps fanning him, telling him that God has a purpose in saving him.*



*A 45-year-old man had a stroke earlier to the riots. His younger brother was taking care of his family. After the riots, the younger brother lost his job in the Printing Press where he was working. The loss made him commit suicide. Subsequently he has become very sad, does not talk with others and tears fill his eyes. Once he attempted suicide and dragged himself to the switchboard to hold a naked wire. Now his wife is cautious and does not move away from him. She keeps reciting from the holy book for him.*

For some people repeated images and recall of the disaster, decreased sleep, reduced appetite, lack of concentration and/or fatigability can continue or increase over time. This can interfere with daily functioning and prevent them from re-organising/rebuilding their lives. These people need professional help. This would normally be for a proportion of the population. These reactions would appear after few months or so and can be quite intense and disabling. **You can take steps to help hasten the recovery process.** The next section looks at what you can do.

# WHAT WILL HELP YOU RECOVER FASTER?

There are many things that you can do for yourself and others around you to hasten the recovery process. These can be at the personal level, with other family members or at the community level. Here we look at all three levels.

## I | INITIATIVES YOU CAN TAKE

### ■ Acceptance of the changes

Following an emotional event, it is very common for individuals to deny that something serious has happened in each one's life and they are now different from what they were before the riots. It is at times helpful to deny the losses and changes. However, without acceptance, healing and rebuilding can get delayed.

*For example, a person with a broken bone has to accept that he needs help. Only this acceptance will lead the person to take medical help and subsequently follow physical exercises to recover the normal movement. Denial can lead to abnormal union of the bone and long-term disability.*

One of the first steps in recovery is acceptance of the event and how it has changed life. This will help start the rebuilding process.

### ■ Sharing your thoughts, feelings and concerns with others

Once you have understood how you are feeling, it is good to be able to share your experiences, feelings and thoughts with someone you trust. This helps you to decrease whatever you are experiencing and will help you get relief from the emotional stress you will be feeling. Understanding your reactions as weakness and avoiding seeking support can be detrimental.

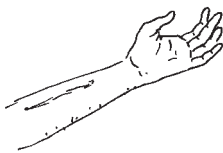
*For instance, in a pressure cooker, the safety valve is very important. The safety valve helps the extra pressure to be released, failing which the whole cooker could burst. It systematically and periodically takes the extra pressure out slowly and helps in getting the food cooked.*

**It is important to slowly and repeatedly give expression to tensions, pain, anger or other emotions that you are experiencing.** We often do not spend time thinking about emotions because they are invisible when compared to death, damage to

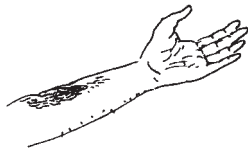
physical health and property. But it is important to remember that emotional reactions occur commonly. **No one who witnesses a disaster is untouched.**

It is important to realise that rebuilding your life and reconstruction of the entire community following the disaster depends upon your ability to accept the losses as early as possible. It will help you to understand and emotionally accept the current situation and thereby work towards reconstruction of life at the individual, family and community level.

*Let us take an example of a man with an injury. An injury to any part of the body will heal over a period of time because the body has the ability to repair damage. The natural repair process takes sometime. However, if he gets immediate first aid for his injury (e.g., cleaning the wound with clean water and covering the wound with a sterile or clean cloth) the healing will be hastened, thereby the pain and discomfort will gradually reduce. But on the other hand, if the wound is unattended, it is likely to get infected and healing will be delayed, leaving a bad scar. This might even cause some limitation in the normal functioning of that part of the body.*



*It is important to note that in both cases the scar remains but in the former situation the scar is limited and does not produce a limitation in function. In the latter case the scar is extensive and can produce a limitation in functioning.*

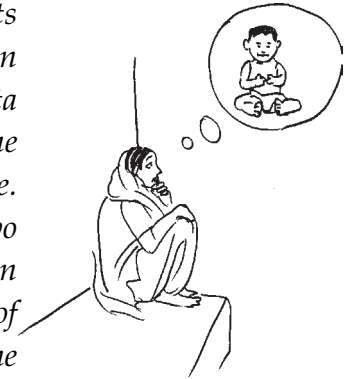


Similarly, pain due to loss and death leads to certain emotional reactions. You need to share your feelings with others so as to decrease the pain you are experiencing. This expression of feelings and talking to others works like the sterile cloth over the opening of the wound, preventing infection, allowing the body to work and heal. Non-availability of such help to release or share these emotions can leave a deep scar in the mind. Therefore, it is very important to share your pain, feelings and thoughts about personal losses with others.

For instance, if you are feeling guilty about not having done enough to save your neighbour while you were fleeing and these thoughts have been bothering you, then the incident will hamper your daily life, you may find it difficult to sleep and can feel depressed. Sharing this with someone will help reduce the stress in your mind and reduce the guilt.

Do find people in your family or relatives or friends with whom you can share your feelings and thoughts? Aman Pathiks around you will always be willing to spend time listening and being with you when you need them.

*30-year-old L lost two children aged 5 and 6 years; in the riots they were burnt and killed in front of her. She herself was beaten up and has burn injuries on her back. She said, "Achacha lagata hain jab koi aata hai." She is currently residing in her new home that has been rebuilt after the riots destroyed her earlier home. While talking every now and then her mind returns to her two children who she lost and she breaks down. She talks of her son who she said was a very special child as he was a result of a lot of prayers at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. She asks, "What had the children done to anyone? They were so innocent. They could have taken me (un masoomo ne kya bigada tha kisika, mujhe le jate)." She shared her memories with the Aman Pathiks and felt relieved (Sukoon milta hai).*



#### ■ Get support

Everyone feels better with emotional support that comes from others around him/ her. **Social support networks are extremely important for feeling secure and cared for.** In a disaster situation, these support systems get disrupted. It is essential to try and rebuild some of these support systems.

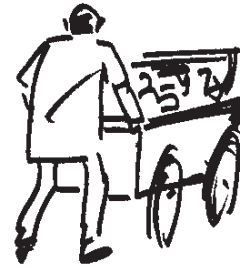


One way is to reach out to the Aman Pathiks who are there for this very support and care. Take time to sit with them and share your feelings, thoughts and experiences. The more you share the less overwhelming will be the pain of your experience. You will slowly be able to build a bond with them and they would be able to help you master the present situation.

It is important to form networks with people from your own area as well as get in touch with your relatives in other towns or localities. Try and be part of groups of similar ages and encourage others around you to do so too. For example, if you are an adolescent boy / girl get together with other boys / girls of your age and do things together. Do not feel that you are a weak person because you are seeking support.

*Prior to the riots 45-year-old 'Chacha' (means Uncle in the regional language and is also used with respect) used to have a handcart to sell fruits. The cart was burnt up in the riots. The Aman Pathik working with him helped him get a cart as part of the*

compensation package. Chacha however shared his fears about returning to the earlier locality where he used to sell the fruits and now was wondering where to start. The Aman Pathik went back to the same area and spoke to shopkeepers saying that Chacha was nervous about returning. The shopkeepers confirmed that nobody would say anything to him and most certainly he could set up shop there. The Aman Pathik persuaded M to then set up shop in the same locality. On the first day itself, the Aman Pathik went and bought fruits worth Rs25 from Chacha to show others that there was business being done and help Chacha feel good. All this was of great help to Chacha to give him back his confidence to return to his earlier locality and restart his business.



The Aman Pathik was able to give support to Chacha to restart his livelihood. It did not stop with just getting him a handcart but beyond that. Chacha too accepted and took the support being offered by the Aman Pathik to get back to a routine life.

*Mr N has lost all the women in his family and was unable to manage the daily task of making meals. To help him people from his extended family came and stayed with him.*

#### ***A 37-year-old lady***

*Whatever we have right now were given by others around us who were not affected by the riots. We lost everything.*

#### ***A 28-year-old woman***

*During the riots she was separated from her in-laws and husband. The rioters caught her, beat her up and partially burnt her. She was hospitalised. Her husband visited her only once but left without taking her back. Then after a week or so her parents took her home. Currently she is with her parents who have supported her during this trying time. Her in-laws and husband are not too keen to take her back since she is burnt.*

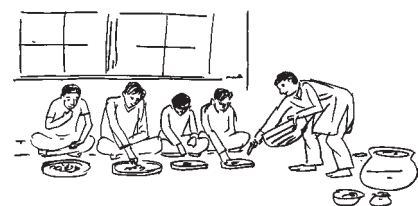
The support can be in small measures like being there in person or giving material help like utensils or clothes, etc.

### **■ Externalise your interests**

It is very important to make **constructive use of your time** even though all your normal life routines are disrupted.

#### ***A 32-year-old woman***

*I have started cooking our own chappatis. Sometimes if they require help with cutting the vegetables then I even help out with that. It gives me something to do the whole day. Also we make the chappatis the way we like it.*



### **A 38-year-old woman**

The 'Bal Muskaan' programme is good and my son goes there. Earlier he used to just keep sitting and harass me too (Mujhe bhi hairan karta tha). Now he looks forward to going to the session; he has something that takes his mind away from the painful memories and emotions.

### **A 40-year-old woman**

The greatest time we had was when the weddings were on. It felt like a big family preparing for a wedding. There was a lot of laughter and fun. During the 'Haldi' ceremony and while putting 'Mehendi', for sometime we were able to forget all our pain.

These little things are productive for the people involved in terms of enhancing their recovery process. They are engaged in activities and their minds are meaningfully occupied. Physical movement helps in feeling better and energised. **Get involved in the camp activities or rebuilding of your home.** Follow a daily routine.

If you have some interests which can be pursued, follow them. For instance, if you like being with children then offer to look after some children for sometime, giving the parents some free time, or join the children's programme as a facilitator. At some camps, people interested in sewing have been given training and machines are provided. These groups of women have started sewing. **Try and get engaged in activities which are of your interest.**

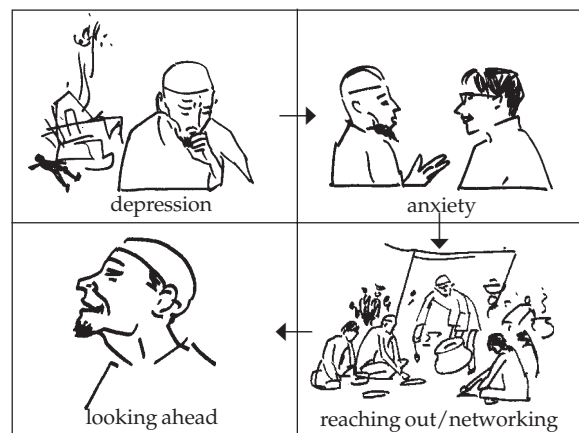
**Getting back to routine** is a great way of dealing with stress and emotional reactions. The more you engage in activities or recreation, the greater will be the normalisation in your life. It is important to take control of your mind and let it get involved in non-tense situations and experiences in order to recover faster.

Here are some instances when people have been able to structure their time into meaningful activities which contribute to their recovery:



### **A 32-year-old woman**

She had a sewing machine which she used to keep at home and stitch clothes. But during the riots, everything was burnt and looted. She said that the clothes that were kept for stitching were also set on fire. She has hired a sewing machine and continues her stitching.



Emotional reactions undergo change over time.



### **A 16-year-old boy**

*This boy was interested in children and has signed up as a facilitator for the Bal Muskaan (Centre for children). He is engaging not only with children at the camp but also does other work outside the camp, getting lists, attending meetings, etc. This has helped him forget his own pain. Initially his mother said he was afraid of going out of the camp but slowly he has started regaining his confidence.*



### ■ Find time to relax

**Relaxation is the opposite of tension.** Engaging in recreational activities is very beneficial to help with the recovery process, like listening to music. Some men in the camps were listening to the radio, some camps had a loudspeaker with music playing. It just changed the atmosphere of the place.

Make time during the day to lie down for sometime. Go for walks and spend time just being at peace with yourself.

***Undertake relaxation exercises regularly, it is very beneficial too.***

*Sit in a squatting position with hands on the knees. Then take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds and slowly exhale. Do this for at least 5–10 minutes slowly. Repeat this twice a day.*

*Another exercise: Lie down flat on the floor. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. This should be done for 5 minutes several times a day. Concentrate on fresh air that is coming in and the warm stale air that is going out of your body.*



Here are two instances when children have gone on to do things that help them relax:

### **A 16-year-old boy**

*He used to paint beautifully and had lots of good colours and drawing material according to the mother. During the recent riots he lost all his materials and the three drawing books he had. But right now his parents have managed to get him some colours and one book to start off with and Mr G has already started painting.*

### **A 6-year-old boy**

*He lost everyone in his family. He stays in the camp still and does few odd jobs earning about Rs 30 per day. Out of the Rs 30 that he earns he spends Rs 10 daily to hire a cycle for two hours and spends time cycling around in the vicinity.*

### **■ Choose positive lifestyles**

It is important that you adopt a positive lifestyle to rebuild your daily life. This means you need to:

- Have at least 8 hours of sleep; take rest during the day if you feel like
- Avoid smoking, avoid alcohol or other intoxicants
- Make sure that you eat your meals, specially your breakfast
- Make time everyday to relax and have a good time by gathering together at a central place, playing games, reading, listening to music, singing, performing prayers.

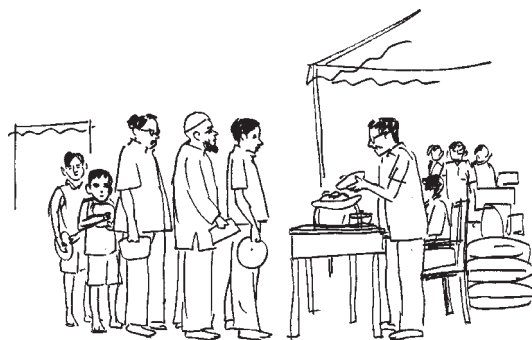


Acknowledge and admit that you will not be always functioning at your usual level of efficiency for a few weeks/months. Try and follow a regular routine and get involved in some activities, whether home keeping or rebuilding activities, to engage your mind productively.

45-year-old X has been able to see that he needs to restart a routine life to help him feel better. To start with, he has accepted that he will be living in the camp for sometime. Then he is working around to see how to best to live a good life here.

### **A 45-year-old man**

*"I was initially very embarrassed to find myself in this camp. Now I have chosen to live with dignity wherever I am. My children still cannot accept living here but I have started. I believe you should have the will to start. I make sure I wash and wear clean clothes and look dignified. Then I sometimes go out and meet my older employers and have started planning what to do. I do not spend time feeling sad or sorry. If you look at me you will find that I am fresh. 10 years ago I started with a hut here and even now we can do it all over again. I stay in the camp and we have tried to make it our space a much as possible. Even though we have relatives outside, I do not go there.*



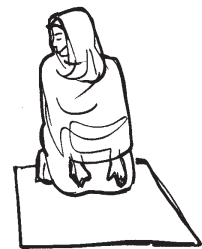
### ***A 42-year-old woman***

*My husband has recovered from his eye operation which he had done while still at the camp. Now that he is better he has started going for his walks daily in the morning and in the evening. At least he does some exercise. Apart from that he also goes once in a while to see our house that is being rebuilt. For myself I have got involved as an Aman Pathik in this programme. I have started cooking here itself. We make our own food and then all of us get on with our tasks for the day.*



### **■ Practice your spiritual beliefs**

In our country religious belief or belief in a higher power greater than human beings is an integral part of our own self, giving us great relief and support during testing times. Initiate and participate in rituals like collective -grieving, prayer meetings or group mournings if you have lost a near and dear one. This will help you come to terms with the loss of the person.



You will question this power at times to ask why you are suffering and why you had to go through the pain but at the same time you will find strength in the same power to get through any crisis you are facing. So it is important to practice whatever spiritual belief you have as it has tremendous power to heal pain.

Both the examples given below illustrate how spirituality can help us get back a sense of normalcy.

### ***A 4-year-old child***

*After the riots when the family returned home, 4-year-old K started demonstrating clinging behaviour so much so that his mother was unable to go to the bathroom, without him crying and banging on the door.*

*When the first day the Aman Pathik visited the home, the child refused to speak with him. The mother said that his elder sister had started going to school but this boy was refusing to go to the Madrasa, which he earlier used to enjoy going to. He was feeling very scared and nervous. The Aman Pathik spent sometime but the child hid behind the mother and refused to speak. Then he stood behind his mother without showing his face and when the Aman Pathik asked whether he would like to be go to a big school, he answered in a loud voice, “yes”. Then the Aman Pathik asked, “Is it okay if I come*



back tomorrow; will you speak to me?" He said, "Yes", again all the while hiding behind his mother's head.

The Aman Pathik returned the next day and accompanied the boy to the Madrasa, which the child used to enjoy going to. They did this for a few days, after which the child started going on his own. So although he did not want to go to school, the child's spiritual interest was used as a medium to get over his clinging behaviour.

### **Community Mosque**

The community mosque has been repaired in one of the areas which was badly affected by the riots and prayers are regularly being said there. The people who have started returning home visit the mosque regularly. They showed the loudspeakers that have just been put up. The children of the community rely a lot on their religious belief saying, "When we feel scared at night and cannot sleep, we say our prayers and with the name of god, shut our eyes and then fall asleep (jab neend nahin aa rahi hoti to Bismila karke aankh band kar leteing hain)."

**You can use the above seven initiatives to help get back to your normal way of living again. Given below are some examples of what to do:**

**Some things you can do if:**

■ **You have a problem in falling asleep at night**

- Practice the relaxation techniques before going to bed
- Make sure you talk with your family everyday, share good things that happened that day
- Read some book
- If something is bothering you discuss it with someone
- Go for a walk in the evening
- Pray before sleeping.



■ **You have a problem in controlling your anger**

- Talk to someone about what makes you angry
- Think of the different ways the irritating issue can be seen
- Do some physical exercise daily; it will relax your mind
- Get involved in doing some work; it will take your mind off the issue
- Practice relaxation on a daily basis
- Pray regularly
- If you find yourself getting angry, stop and take a few deep breathes to calm yourself
- Talk to someone who is coping with his or her anger in a healthier manner.

■ **You find that you are constantly feeling tired**

- Get enough sleep at night
- Take a nap in the afternoon after lunch
- Structure your day and follow a regular routine
- Do some physical exercises
- Eat well, specially your morning breakfast
- Drink enough water during the day
- Include an enjoyable event like listening to music, playing a game in your routine.



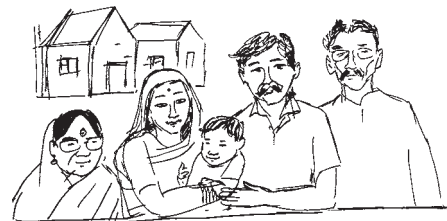
These simple steps will help you get back to a routine and then make you feel much better. Soon you will be functioning as you used to.

## **Y**OUR FAMILY

The family is the primary unit of care and support for all individuals. In stressful situations, the role of a family as a caregiver becomes even more critical. They are the best people to give support and comfort.

*You can take some steps to help your family to recover*

Be together as a family. Do not send women, children etc., to other places for safety as the separation can cause anxiety to them and to you. Take time to sit together and share the experience of losses. Touch and comfort your parents, children, spouse, etc. It will make you as well as the other person feel good. It is a good idea to contact other relatives. It will help you to feel strengthened. If you have lost a family member then participate in rituals like prayers, placing the dead persons photographs in front of you, etc.



Make time for family recreation using what is available like the radio, television, visiting religious places, playing with children and engaging in sewing. Resume normal activities of the pre-disaster days with the family. Restart activities that are special to your family like having meals together, praying, playing games, etc. All this will help get a sense of normalcy back to your life.

*A family member has experienced violence/injury*

Anyone who suffers painful and hurtful experiences reacts physically and emotionally. It is important to take special care because he/she can:

- keep thinking all the time about those painful experiences from the past.
- feel as though reliving the same experiences repeatedly

- have nightmares and difficulties falling asleep
- develop physical pains and problems
- lose interest in life and feel tired all the time
- have a tendency to get angry over small things or change moods quickly
- feel humiliated and weak and often afraid or nervous
- have the tendency to have strong feelings of revenge.



Listen to them. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings. Reassuring them that they are not sick or weak and will get better over time is very important. They need to feel safe and cared for. Help them understand that they did the best anyone could have done in that situation. Make special efforts to get this person to talk about the experience. Get additional support like medical help. Enable the person to use some relaxation techniques regularly.

***A family member who has been raped***

Our culture and religion discourages us to talk on such issues. The problem remains hidden and creates psychological pain and suffering for the person who has been raped. People who have been raped often feel ashamed, humiliated, dirty and soiled. As family members you have the responsibility of ensuring that she feels cared for and is able to share her pain and experiences with you.



Acknowledge her anger and pain; let the person express anger towards the people who violated her, as it helps in releasing pent up tensions and emotions. Do not let the person feel isolated. Try to get the person back to daily life activities, let the person take up something that interests her, like sewing activities, painting, etc. This will stop the person from constantly thinking about the experience.

She can have problems falling asleep, can become fearful of strangers lack appetite and feel helpless. It is important to be very supportive and understanding of her to help decrease the pain she is experiencing. Most importantly give the person space and comfort to talk about the experience as often as she wishes. Let her know that she was not responsible for what happened because often people who have been raped feel guilty. Attend to the support she might require as part of her livelihood, or for medical care regarding other physical problems and help her recover.

***Children in the family need special attention***

Children do not have the mental or emotional maturity to understand adverse situations like adults. Often they cannot comprehend what has happened to them. The impact of events like loud noises, shouting, running, panic and anxiety, separation from loved ones, loss of the comfortable environment, etc., affects them more than an adult.



Children tend to show reactions to stress in the form of crying, clinging to adults, becoming listless and apathetic, having disturbed sleep, wetting their bed at night, developing health problems and behaving like a child much younger than his/her age. When they get back to school they might do badly in their studies. They can show behaviour like irritability, anger, fights, lying, disobedience, etc., which would all be ways of showing their anger at what has happened. You have to take measures to increase feelings of security and bonding. You need to understand that these changes are 'normal' for the situation and take measures to help the child get over his/her stress. Some things you can do are:

- Re-establishing routines like eating, sleeping, going to school
- Giving security by actions like touching, hugging, reassuring them verbally
- Allowing them to talk about the event and listen to them without giving any advice
- Encouraging them to play or offering opportunities for painting and drawing where they can express their emotions. This is very healing
- Story telling, singing songs and games involving physical movement are other things that will help them feel better
- Giving lots of praise and love to them
- Pay more attention and spend time on their studies once they return to school.

***If there are old people in your community there must be efforts to support them***

Very old people are often not totally in control of situations. They can take a longer time to recover from the disaster. When confronted with the death of many young people in front of them they can become very depressed, they might withdraw and cry. They may find it difficult to sleep and lose their appetite and also fall ill. At times you may find them agitated and at other times they would be feeling hopeless and having suicidal tendencies

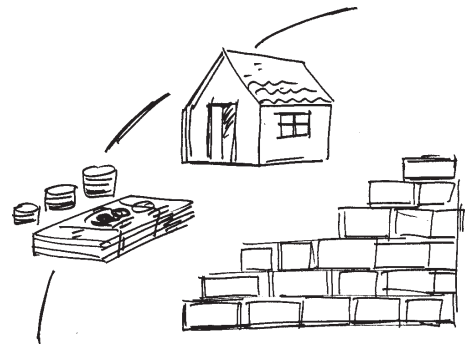


It is important to take special care of them. They need to be near their loved ones and people who can spend time with them. Touching them and allowing them to cry when they feel like it is really beneficial because quite often they talk of their past life.

Re-establishing their daily routines, giving them responsibility that they can carry out without too much difficulty and enabling them to pray are some things that can help them to feel better.

## **H**ANDLING RELIEF AND COMPENSATION

Settling claims for compensation can be a very exhausting process both emotionally as well as with regard to physical running around. Returning to your home and seeing the destruction, or while filling out forms and having to state who all passed away, etc., or making a list of all that you lost, can be very upsetting.



You will find the process of having to fill out many forms and repeating personal details very often tiring. You will not get immediate returns for all your efforts. This makes you feel very frustrated. You need to have patience and wait for the money and other assistance to come; it may often take longer than it really should. Whenever the wait is too long then share your feelings with Aman Pathiks. They will understand and support you. **Remember, you are not alone in this.** Often, the compensation that you are waiting for is not really adequate in terms of what you have lost and the rebuilding will not be comparable to what you earlier had. All these issues can cause you anger and make you feel upset. Understand this is a normal feeling that anyone would go through. It is important to seek out Aman Pathiks at these times and share your feelings and thoughts with them. Sharing your feelings will help you feel much better and also others will be able to help.

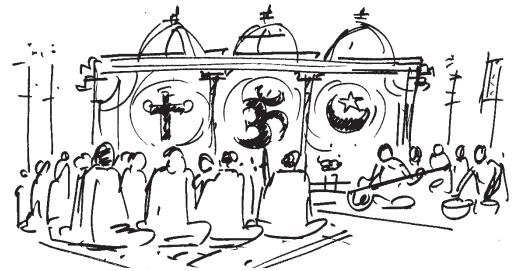
Try and tap many sources to find out how you can re-start your livelihood as soon as possible. See what sort of assistance the groups providing help with rebuilding of homes can give you. It is important that you draw from as many sources as you can.

## **Y**OUR COMMUNITY

The following activities help in rebuilding of community life and setting up the social support systems, which is essential in the long-term rehabilitation process. The community as a whole can think of actions not only on how best to rebuild lives but also take steps to prevent further occurrences.

### ■ Group meetings

Take part in group meetings and brainstorm about various measures/initiatives for rebuilding the community. These stimulate you to think. It helps the community to come to terms with the reality of loss and emptiness and helps to initiate collective action and rebuild lives.



*Meetings happened at the camps to discuss issues like the preparations for mass marriages. At one place a community meal was organised and prior to that meetings pertaining to that were held.*

### ■ Supporting group initiatives

Support community-based actions like clearing rubble from broken homes, putting up temporary shelters, providing food for those who are the only survivors or those who are disabled or dependent.



This helps you feel good and also benefits others who need help to come to terms with reality. There are initiatives to mobilise support for community contribution, whether in cash or kind, towards rebuilding to homes.

*There were camps that were being run by local community members. At one place a member of the other community had donated the cinema hall for running a camp. Other groups took up rebuilding of homes while some sponsored the mass weddings.*

### ■ Group mourning

Group mourning is a process of mass grieving. It expresses solidarity of the grief-stricken community and facilitates unity and collective action. These are traditional methods for people to come to terms with their loss and start their grieving process, which in turn will help you move ahead in your life. Try to take part in such activities.

### ■ Cultural aspects

There are cultural aspects of each community that help with recovery from a traumatic event. Singing of folk songs in Orissa was seen as helping people gather in a common place and share their grief. There is a sense of commonality in grief that increases the cohesiveness of the community and motivates them. Anything that is culturally uplifting should be encouraged. All these lead to a normalisation process and faster recovery.

*In Gujarat the process of putting mehendi is very common and at camps this was initially started when mass weddings were organised. Later it carried on even when there was no wedding at the camp. These incidents, though small, were steps towards the normalisation of lives.*

### ■ Sensitisation process

Organise rallies to sensitise the administration regarding delays in implementation of action for restoration, rebuilding, relocation, compensation, etc. Rallies are also a powerful expression of solidarity.

*A rally was taken out by the people which also had key members of the government participating. This was done in an area where earlier there was great insecurity. It helped in rebuilding the faith of the people in the government agency. It helped sensitise the government office bearers to the reality of the situation.*



Involve religious leaders, opinion leaders, in all community activities. Talk to the larger community about re-education, especially on ways to handle rumours.

*The cultural wing of the Amansamudaya is holding street plays both within and outside the camps, which is getting great responses from the audiences. It is leaving behind ideas to think and reflect upon.*

It is important to remember that we as individuals have certain **responsibilities** as well. Keeping these in mind will ensure that we prevent further troublesome situations and build a stronger united society.

- Try to obtain authentic information; do not believe in rumours
- Do not spread rumours
- Deal with your negative feelings in a healthy and positive manner
- Help in promoting secular feelings among others, specially in children.

It is only through the combined efforts of working at our individual level, then moving on to our family members and finally to our community that we can really look at wholistic rebuilding after any disaster. We need to work at all these three levels before any work can have a long-term constructive effect.

## **CONCLUSION**

Reading this booklet you will have understood the emotional reactions you are experiencing and seeing around are normal responses to an abnormal situation. You will also understand that reactions go through stages and as time moves on, by taking a few steps to care for yourself, a sense of normalcy returns. The important thing is to accept the reactions as being normal and take active steps to hasten the recovery process.

This booklet highlights certain steps like returning to a routine lifestyle, spending time sharing your thoughts, feelings and experiences, adopting healthy lifestyles, pursuing interests and spiritual beliefs as areas to focus on to hasten the recovery process.

It is clear that families have members, like women, the elderly and children and the disabled, who may require special care and attention because of their vulnerability. The booklet also highlights steps to support and care for these members and help them cope with the situation in an effective manner.

The whole mechanism to recover and rebuild focuses on the strength of the family and the community as a unit and how one can draw support from it for greater and sustainable healing and recovery.

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## A m a n   P a t h i k s

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Afsar Hussain, Sheikh  
Anish, Sheikh Anjuman Ara, Sheikh Anjuman Banu,  
Sheikh Ashia, Sheikh Azim Bhai, Sheikh Jahunisa, Sheikh  
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### WHAT WE KNOW...

- ◆ Intense emotional reactions in the face of these events are expected and normal.
- ◆ There is a trajectory of responses over time most often starting early and subsiding within weeks and months. But for some people, the onset of responses may be delayed. In others, the reactions may become long-term leading to considerable disability.
- ◆ Responses will be highly individual in nature, often quite intense and sometimes conflictual. The vast majority of reactions are in the normal range and the intensity will diminish for most people over time without the need for professional help. Support from family and friends is critical. For some, however, the degree of exposure may lead to more serious and prolonged reactions.
- ◆ The range of feelings experienced may be quite broad. People may describe intense feelings of sadness followed by anger. Others may experience fearfulness and hypervigilance to the environment among numerous other reactions.
- ◆ There may be temporary disruptions in normal coping mechanisms for many people and some may go on to develop problems with sleep, nightmares, concentration, intrusive thoughts and a preoccupation with reliving the events. These reactions are generally short lived but if they persist, professional consultation should be sought.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- ◆ Create opportunities for people to talk and share experiences in supportive groups. This is often done best in familiar surroundings such as religious places, schools or community centers.
- ◆ Provide accurate and practical information especially concerning the larger recovery efforts. Special attention to the needs of relief applicants is necessary as relating to the rules and regulations of the relief organizations during the crisis can be overwhelming.
- ◆ Give particular consideration to the needs of special groups such as children, those who have been most intensely exposed or had a history of previous events (exposure to trauma), rescue workers, and people with pre existing mental health conditions.
- ◆ Children and adolescents will need the support of their caregivers. This support should reflect accurate concerns, and diminish any words or actions that would increase the child or adolescent's anxiety. Caregivers should offer reassurance as to their presence and availability during this time. Exposure to television, movies or print matter that offers too graphic depictions of the destruction or victims should be limited.
- ◆ A percentage of people, as high as 30%, who experience the most direct exposure to the events may go on to develop more serious mental health concerns and should be referred for services if they develop persistent issues.

Overwhelming feelings are to be expected and can stress individuals, communities and nations. There are many actions that can be taken at the level of governments, international NGOs and local groups to appropriately and effectively support victims of such a catastrophe.

INFORMATION MANUAL 1

# RIOTS

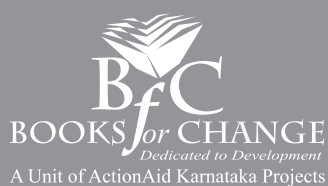
## PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE *for* INDIVIDUALS

Disasters pose a monumental challenge to the total community. There has been a gradual acceptance of the need for psychosocial care. The recent Gujarat Riots has left behind a trail of anger, anguish, betrayal and emotional scars that poses an enormous challenge of normalising the people's feelings, rebuilding the people, reconstruction not only of shelters and livelihood but of the human spirit and communal harmony.

The information booklet is unique because:

1. It addresses normalisation of emotional reaction.
2. It carries a large amount of relevant field experiences.
3. It is based on the actual training of 200 Aman Pathiks.
4. It is user friendly, based on the field level pre-testing and gatekeepers interviews.

It is a collaborative effort of professionals, voluntary agencies and survivors.



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