



SURVIVORS EMPOWERED

We Are Your Soft Place To Land After Your Life
Has Been Forever Changed By Gun Violence

What we at Survivors
Empowered have
experienced and
learned after the worst
thing that can happen
and after responding
to 18 mass shootings

1. The aftermath of a mass shooting damages and/or destroys the foundation of all you know. It often feels like you are living where down is up and up is down and small is large and large is small. Everything is off centered and the only people who understand are those who have been through gun violence.
2. Building a new foundation and a new narrative requires support and understanding. It also requires active "healing" and embracing the trauma of what has happened. We believe in Trauma Therapies such as Mindfulness-based stress-reduction (MBSR) and EMDR because of the success we have witnessed with other survivors as well as personally.
3. You need to be prepared for the things you do not know. Here are some things that happen after a mass casualty event.
 - **FaceBook** pages and **YouTube** videos are immediately put up by conspiracy theorists who deny that the event happened. They will call you crisis actors.
 - People and charities will ask for donations to help the survivors that you will never see.
 - Despite good intentions, there will be divides between families, friends, and community. You will lose friends, but you will gain others. The saying that hurt people hurt people will one day resound with most of you.
 - Politics will get in the way of understanding and "healing."
4. You will be told to "get over it" and "you need to move on" in just weeks or months and definitely in the years to come. Survivors don't get over this or move on. They move forward in spite of the trauma and are different people than they were the minute before the event. Those affected are new people and need support in finding their new narrative. Their lives are forever changed.
5. Resilience comes in time, but "Oxford Strong," "Aurora Strong," "Newtown Strong," etc. send a very harsh message to survivors. It says, "Pick yourself up from your bootstraps and be who you were before." It is an unfair burden to those who witnessed, survived, or had a loved one taken.
6. Trauma untreated presents itself **ALWAYS**. Often as rage, isolation, depression, inappropriate reactions, emotional highs and lows, sleeplessness, self-medicating. Suicides after every mass shooting happen. If you are a responsible gun owner, **PLEASE**, lock up your guns.

(Over)

7. There are literally hundreds of trauma therapies available. EMDR, Mindfulness, Tapping, Equine therapy, etc. You may have success with one or several, but you will find one that works for you. Keep trying and don't give up. Sometimes you have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince or princess but ask questions on the trauma therapy the therapist specializes in and do some research.
8. In time, you will move from the PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) to Post Traumatic Growth, but it will happen... just keep going. It could save your life.
9. You are not alone in this journey. You did not ask to go on this journey, but you are here and there are thousands of survivors of gun violence willing to help support you and you move forward. Here are some FB pages:
 - The Rebels Project
 - Parents of Murdered Children
 - Sibling of Murdered Siblings
 - Victims and Survivors of Gun Violence
 - March For Our Lives
 - Family of Murder Victims
 - Survivors Empowered
10. If there is a trial, you will need additional support. It usually takes at least 3 years for the trial to begin. You will find that it does little to provide justice or give closure. It will cause more trauma. Your DA's office should provide Victims Advocates that will provide information and support as the trial approaches. If they are a really great Victims Advocates office they will provide therapy, service dogs, tissues, a place to go for privacy away from the media and the defense.
11. Contact your local Victims of Crime office and the national Office of Victims of Crime. They are there to help...but it is a bureaucracy. Paperwork is often overwhelming to people with trauma. Those of you who can, please volunteer to help make calls, follow up and fill out the paperwork for those who need this assistance.
12. Trauma brain is real. Memories problems, sleeplessness, restlessness, forgetfulness, concentration issues are very real. Trauma affects the brain and the body and actually changes your DNA. Be kind to yourself and others. Be supportive and understanding. These issues can last for years but can be mitigated with help.

Survivors Empowered is here for you. Not just in the immediate aftermath, but from now forward. You have a lifetime membership in a club you didn't ask to join, and no one wants to be a member of, but we have your back.

We are a non-profit 501c3 for survivors, by survivors to empower survivors

<https://survivorsempowered.org>

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