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NEGATIVE NEWS COVERAGE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In today's fast-paced media climate, the 24-hour news cycle can seem impossible to avoid. We are bombarded with dramatic news coverage and endless clickbait, which has more of an impact on mental health than we may realize.

According to [a survey of 266 therapists by GrowTherapy](#), 99.6% said watching or reading the news can have a negative impact on mental health. People who belong to the [BIPOC](#) or [LGBTQ+](#) communities are more vulnerable.



HOW DOES NEGATIVE NEWS COVERAGE IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH?

- **Watching upsetting news footage starts the body's "fight or flight" response.** [Adrenaline](#) is then released, and so is the stress hormone, cortisol. When our bodies are in this state, we experience the same symptoms we may experience if we were under threat. These symptoms include rapid heart rate, shallow breathing, upset stomach, etc.
- **The news increases depression and anxiety symptoms.** [One study](#) found that people showed an increase in symptoms after only 14 minutes of news consumption. These symptoms are made worse when people feel they have no ability to improve the situations they are learning about on the news.
- **Relying on social media for your news can drive addictive behavior.** This is important to note since [more than 50% of Americans receive their news via social media](#). Clickbait headlines and social media algorithms are designed to keep you coming back for more, making it difficult to stop returning to apps for your news.

IDENTITY MATTERS

People are more likely to be negatively affected by the news when it is [personally relevant to them](#). This is also true when they share an identity with the people involved in the news story. **Because the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities are more often targets of violence and hate crimes, the mental health of people from these communities is impacted more severely by the news.**

According to [a study by Washington University in St. Louis](#), Black Americans experience an increase in poor mental health days during weeks when two or more incidents of anti-Black violence occur. However, this same study showed that white respondents' mental health was not significantly correlated with the timing of racial violence.

In terms of the LGBTQ+ community, there has been a [rise in the negative impacts of anti-LGBTQ+ policies on LGBTQ+ youth](#).

Kasey Suffredini, VP of Advocacy and Government Affairs at the Trevor Project, stated: "Right now, we are witnessing the highest number on record of anti-LGBTQ bills introduced this early in any legislative session...LGBTQ young people are watching, and internalizing the anti-LGBTQ messages they see in the media and from their elected officials. And so are those that would do our community harm."

HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

So, what can we do to support ourselves and each other in the face of negative news coverage?

- **Identify your triggers.** Take some time to think about what subjects stir symptoms of anxiety and depression. Some people may be more reactive to global conflict while others may feel more affected by racial injustice. Once you've figured out what has the strongest impact on you, you can limit your consumption of media with triggering content.
- **Try reading the news** instead of watching video, as [studies](#) show this can be less triggering, in part due to less disturbing imagery with written articles.
- **Limit your time with the news.** Doomscrolling might help you feel more informed about how to protect yourself from the troubles of the world, but it ultimately does more harm than good. Aim for no more than 30 minutes per day if possible.
- **Plan an enjoyable activity after taking in the news,** like engaging in a hobby, to decompress.
- **Take action by [getting involved with a group](#)** that is working on the issues that you are most passionate about. This can help you feel empowered to make change instead of feeling helpless about the world around you.
- **Join an affinity group.** Affinity groups are supportive communities of people who share a common identity, often including their allies. These groups can help foster resilience and create solidarity during times of prejudice or injustice, especially for people from BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or other minoritized groups.
- **Be mindful of your sources.** Sometimes what feels like news can be more based on opinion than facts, so where you get your news can make a big difference. Make sure the information you're getting is accurate and provides a variety of perspectives.
- **Enhance optimism** in your life by doing more of what brings you [joy and satisfaction](#). Some examples include: [social activities](#), [spiritual practices](#), [physical movement](#), mindfulness, creative hobbies, journaling, and gratitude practices. Or, it could be something simple like spending time with a pet.

It can feel hard to escape from the chaos of constant news coverage. While some groups are impacted more significantly, the long-term effects on all of us can include desensitization to such events, as well as [a reduced ability to cope with the stressors of everyday life](#).

If you still feel sad, worried, or scared after trying to help yourself, you might be showing the early warning signs of a mental health condition.

Visit mhascreening.org to take an anonymous, free, and private mental health test. It only takes a few minutes, and after you are finished you will be given information about the next steps you should take based on the results.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741741.