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Five Years after 9/11 Attacks, Americans Show Resilience and Lingering Distress

Arlington, Va. – Five years ago today the worst terrorist attacks in our nation’s history took place – on the World Trade Center, on the Pentagon and in Shanksville, Pa. The impact of these attacks, however, has been felt throughout the entire country, especially with regard to mental health consequences. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) marks this anniversary by praising the resilience of Americans and urging policymakers to recognize the key role that mental health assistance plays in disaster response and preparedness.

Since 2001, the APA has taken a range of steps to help strengthen our ability to help in times of crisis:

1. Through the APA’s public information Web site, www.HealthyMinds.org, the APA has made free and easily accessible mental health information available, such as fact sheets on [posttraumatic stress disorder](#), [depression](#) and [anxiety disorders](#). We urge people who are continuing to struggle in the wake of the attacks to seek help from a psychiatrist, their family physician or another mental health professional.
2. The APA’s Committee of Psychiatric Dimensions of Disaster has created a Web page, www.psych.org/disasterpsych, which has up-to-date disaster-response and -preparedness information, including culturally sensitive mental health care information.
3. The APA, through its annual meetings and scientific journals, has promoted research to help expand our body of knowledge about people’s natural responses to terrorist attacks and natural disasters; effective treatments; and other issues, such as the intersection between trauma exposure and alcoholism and substance use.
4. And the APA is observing this solemn anniversary with a special feature in APA’s scientific journal *Psychiatric Services*. The September issue of the journal presents 15 reports detailing numerous aspects of Project Liberty, the largest federal government-supported disaster mental health program in history. The project was funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and provided a range of interventions and services up through the end of 2003. Data from the project – such as demographic characteristics of those who sought services, outcomes of various interventions, and quality assurance/quality improvement metrics – continue to become available, offering the chance to inform and shape future disaster response plans.

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The APA continues to work with its state associations, district branches and members to honor those who were lost in the attacks by highlighting the mental health needs of Americans. On this somber day we stand together in remembrance and hope for the future.

For more information on coping with disasters, please visit www.psych.org.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is the nation's leading medical specialty society whose more than 36,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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