

Planning For Highdays

Plan ahead: Take time to glance at the months ahead on your calendar, and be aware of any dates coming up that have memories attached to them. Remind parts of your system that days or weeks leading up to these dates could be tough for them.

Acknowledge the date even if you don't want to be focused on it: It is generally helpful to be able to name the truth of what is happening even if parts don't want to focus on it. So while acknowledging that it is a significant day, give your parts full permission not to do anything related to it.

Prepare: If you have experienced a reaction before and feel you might be vulnerable again, do your best to make sure your supportive friends and family members know and are free to be there for you.

Separating past from present: Whether the highday in question is one week or one year since the trauma, note the passage of time and anything that is different now (literally anything, the smallest details count). Help the system come to learn that it's not still happening, or that it's not still happening in the same way.

This practice needs modification for people experiencing ongoing trauma.

Try to identify and recognise trauma associated cues/triggers: Awareness of triggers brings your system more choices. Some parts may want/need to avoid triggers as much as possible.

Cut down on media: Be aware not just of your own trauma days but of any public traumas, such as terrorist events or natural disasters that will receive massive media coverage, possibly including distressing imagery, which could trigger parts memories. Limit watching of TV, reading of internet news sites around these times.

Talk about it: The single most important thing is finding a way to express your memories and feelings. You can either: talk with a friend or family member; make notes or keep a diary about it; or find other creative ways of expressing your feelings and inner experiences, whatever feels most comfortable.

Look after yourself: Make sure you take good care of yourself during these times. Self-care, support and comfort will help you to move through your trauma.

Connections: Only connect If you feel that you're struggling, remember that you do not have to be alone with your memories.

Commemorate: It is tempting to avoid thinking directly about this highday and the event at the centre of it, but it can be very helpful to directly address your loss or trauma so you can release your feelings about it in a controlled, public way. You can do this by visiting the cemetery, or making a donation or taking part in an event by a related charity.

Remember it is temporary: Highday reactions can be very strong but will pass within a week or two and you will come out the other side feeling lighter.