

Trauma in the tsunami aftermath: there is a way out

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Although I live in Australia, far away from the tragic 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean, I've still been distressed by the scenes of hundreds of bodies lined up for identification in makeshift open-air reception areas.

Like many other travelers, I've visited Southeast Asia. I've seen first-hand the lack of resources and infrastructure in many locations, and I've noticed how the people there never complain. They strive to do the best they can with what's available to them.

But even this non-complaining attitude can be tested by the unexpectedness of sudden disaster and death. How can you effectively deal with the mental and emotional side-effects of trauma?

I leaned on the powerful presence of God's love.

I was a traveling entertainer during the Vietnam War. I'll never forget the things I saw. I stood next to rows and rows of body bags at the Da Nang airport. I saw a fellow entertainer shot dead as she performed on stage. There was no one to give me trauma counseling or help me cope with what I had witnessed. But I did have one resource right at hand—the comfort of divine Love, God. I leaned on the powerful presence of God's love, supporting and sustaining me.

In overcoming trauma, I found I needed courage and strength to get beyond the numbness of shock. These spiritual resources, I learned, were within me. I didn't have to go out and acquire them. I knew God had equipped me with resiliency and buoyancy. He had given me the ability to bounce back and not remain distressed by horror. So when I felt traumatized by loss of life, my prayers went like this:

I cannot be paralyzed mentally or emotionally.

"Dear Father, You have made me strong—like You. You have given me courage to go on. I cannot be paralyzed mentally or emotionally. You are upholding me. You are helping me right now. I can overcome trauma. You have given me the capacity to move forward. Your love is comforting me and I can feel safe in Your care."

As I prayed daily, the emotional pain lessened. I was able to pray for and comfort my colleagues and we were able to carry on with our commitments.

Today, these same ideas are helping me pray for the people in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia and the Maldives. It's enabling me to affirm, for the residents of these countries as well as those involved in the recovery work, that Love is giving them the strength to do what they have to do. I know it is deeply distressing and demanding work. But I am praying with all my might that their grief and pain will be lessened, as people around the world embrace them in love and support.

Right now, as I think of the tsunami survivors, I pray that they feel God's comfort and care, and that He will fortify their hands as they put together the pieces of their lives. With God's love sustaining them, I feel confident that they will get through this ordeal. The shock and horror will pass and the peace of divine Love will fill their hearts.

Beverly Goldsmith is a Christian Science [practitioner](#) and [teacher](#) in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Visit her [web site](#) for inspirational [healing articles](#), [Takeaway Tips](#), [Spiritual Q&A](#) and [E-Cards](#).

Find strength in prayer: Science and Health: 66:10, 426:8-14