The staff at the UMass Employee Assistance Program send our sincere thoughts and prayers to all who have been affected by yesterday’s shocking and tragic events during the Boston Marathon. Our sympathies go out to all those who have lost a loved one, or have in anyway been affected by this shocking event.

Yesterday’s events in Boston were at the very least unexpected. You may be asking questions such as, how could we have been more prepared? How could this have been prevented? Why would anyone want to harm innocent people? These are difficult questions to answer and may affect how you deal with this senseless tragedy. We may never be able to answer all of these questions and because of that we need to be sure we are paying close attention to ourselves. If you have been directly or indirectly impacted by this event be aware of how your body and mind are reacting. Here are some common emotional and physical symptoms to be aware of:

Emotional and psychological symptoms of trauma may include:

- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling disconnected or numb

Physical symptoms of trauma may include:

- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Edginess and agitation
- Muscle tension

Recovering from a traumatic event takes time, and everyone heals in their own way. But if several weeks have gone by and your symptoms aren’t letting up, you may need some additional support and assistance. Symptoms such as:

- having trouble functioning at home or work
- suffering from severe fear, anxiety, or depression
- experiencing terrifying memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- avoiding places, people or things that remind you of the event
- isolating yourself from others
- self medicating with drugs or alcohol

We encourage you to contact the UMass EAP for support and assistance. Please know that a counselor is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond to your concerns and needs. Don’t hesitate to call us at 800-322-5327.