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[00:00:26] **Speaker 1** The world is an increasingly scary place. Political assassinations, mass shootings at schools, churches, and on the street. Even though some of the violence is close to home, the sense is it won't happen to me. But that's what survivors often say. And how are people to make their way in the face of it? We asked Sydney Timmer-Murillo, Assistant Professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin, and psychologists treating trauma and traumatic injury. And thanks for being here. So is there such a thing as collective trauma, where people generally feel a sense of foreboding in the current climate?

[00:01:05] **Speaker 2** Yeah, absolutely. I think especially with the frequency that we're seeing violence and such highly broadcasted events of violence, we can absolutely, as humans, feel the weight of so much profound trauma.

[00:01:22] **Speaker 1** So watching the deadly mayhem of the fire and church shooting in Michigan was so much. And then it's an endless loop in social media. How much does that endless loop wear on people?

[00:01:41] **Speaker 2** Yeah, we know that the frequency of how much you see trauma or experience trauma matters. So that repetition of violence really can impact somebody quite significantly. And it's normal for them to then start to experience anxiety or fear or really a threat to their sense of safety, even if it wasn't you who experienced the violence per se.

[00:02:07] **Speaker 1** How injurious is this exposure in people's day-to-day lives, perhaps especially children and young adults, things they see on screens?

[00:02:17] **Speaker 2** Yeah, so, you know, everybody is different. We can see a range of different reactions from an understandable spike in your emotion when you first see that violent event, but it can grow and really build a cascade into mental health concerns or mental health diagnoses. And so an individual, you, know, especially kids and children and adults when they're trying to make sense of it. It can really start to shape your worldview and whether or not you feel safe operating in the world. So maybe you start to avoid certain things that used to be normal for you. It might be difficult for you to go to work or go to school.

[00:02:59] **Speaker 1** And so the shock of assassinations and school shootings is obviously so deeply disturbing. Should people not directly involved sit with that or move along?

[00:03:13] **Speaker 2** Yeah, we would encourage that, you know, you can't necessarily always escape the bad things happening in life or media and you want to be informed, but it's definitely important to take breaks. I would argue that, taking those social media breaks and really making sure you're engaged with your day-to-day life, your loved ones and family can really keep you grounded when navigating so much tension in this world. How does trauma affect people who have experience? How does trauma affect people who have experienced it? What we know from the research is that if you have a history of trauma that puts you at greater risk of developing psychopathology after any subsequent types of trauma. And so if you, let's say, even were in like a motor vehicle collision and then now you're dealing with new exposures to violence, it does tend to put you at a greater risk or it's something that I would be looking out for when I'm trying to help treat somebody for, let's say, post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.

[00:04:18] **Speaker 1** In what feels like a violent world and is, is the practice of trauma treatment a growing field?

[00:04:28] **Speaker 2** Absolutely. Yeah, I think, you know, a majority of people will experience at least one trauma in their lifetime, but we know that a lot of people are at risk for more than just one traumatic experience or they live in communities with high rates of violence. And so because of that, you now, I think mental health providers really do need to be prepared for addressing trauma in whatever they're doing with their patients. But we are definitely growing in terms of specializations as well, that we need these providers to really be able to hone in on the root of somebody's trauma reactions. And that tends to need some pretty specialized treatment to be able do that effectively.

[00:05:14] **Speaker 1** What makes someone resilient to trauma?

[00:05:19] **Speaker 2** Yeah, what a great question. You know, I think it is important to remember that there is resilience in the face of trauma. And there are so many things that can contribute to that. There can be individual factors, so how you regulate your emotions in the face of fear and threat to your safety. But I also think social support is such a profoundly important resilience factor, really connecting to your loved ones when you have been exposed to violence. It's so critical for trying to move forward and cope with the reactions. All right. Well, thank you so much.

[00:05:57] **Speaker 1** For more on this and other issues facing Wisconsin, visit our website at pbswisconsin.org and then click on the news tab. That's our program for tonight. I'm Frederica Freyberg. Have a good weekend.

[00:07:21] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:07:21] **Speaker 1** All right. It's important. Well, thank you, because your voice allows other people to say, yeah, okay, I'm not alone.