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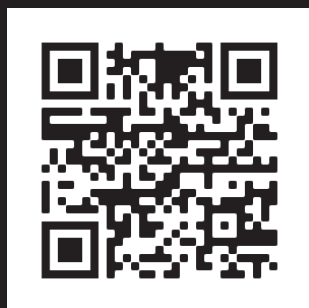
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## ASK JOEY



# Post-election despair

Here are ways to cope, no matter who is the next president

BY JOEY GARCIA / @AskJoeyGarcia

**Prepare yourself for grief. Tidal waves of** despair are headed our way no matter who wins the 2020 presidential election.

The pandemic has already triggered a sense of powerlessness, fear, anger and aggression. The election results will further ignite emotional pain because each vote either supports the continued abuse of power, or advances a system in which power is harnessed to benefit inclusivity, diversity and equality. We need tools to notice, process and express pain in a healthy manner. The following can help.

### **Soothe post-election emotional pain:**

Motion transforms emotions. Stop the downward spiral of sadness and anger by moving your body. Pop on a set of headphones and dance in your living room. Go for a walk, a bike ride or scrub your floors. Distract yourself from taking a downward spiral by channeling excess energy through your body in a way that does not harm others.

**Give what you've got:** You may need to withdraw briefly to tend to despair, but please, set a timer on it. Give yourself four hours or a day. Then get on with the business of creating joy. At the beginning of the pandemic, I sent handwritten greeting cards to businesses and medical professionals just for the sheer pleasure of it. I cleared closets to find goodies to give away and contributed to an international nonprofit. We must all be, or become, good global citizens working toward a future that benefits everyone.

**Reduce anger and aggression:** Anger tells us we've suppressed our personal power and need to practice better self-care. It also boosts our risk of stroke, weakens immune systems, increases risk of heart disease and worsens depression and anxiety. Traditional meditation—the type free of apps, music or guided

visualization—nourishes self-awareness. Over time, we develop the ability to notice when anger sparks and can calm ourselves before acting out. A meditation practice can also inspire us to walk away when we begin to express our anger and to use anger skillfully when a bully taunts us. In the latter situation, a meditation practice prepares us to speak strongly, without cursing or threat, to remind that individual she has crossed a boundary and must stop. Post-election, verbal self-defense is key.

### **Protect your self-worth:**

The outcome of the election is not a personal rejection of the values you cherish. It's a recognition that other values have taken root. Keep your self-worth strong by cleaving to your humane beliefs.

### **Remember to whom you belong:**

Political tribalism driven by an us-against-them mentality has harmed us all. A more courageous truth is that we all belong to the earth and to each other. Some of us believe we also belong to God. It's a spiritual undertaking to respect the personhood of someone who does not offer the same to us. And yet, that grace may be what saves us.

No matter presidential election's outcome, we each possess personal power to soothe emotional pain, reduce aggression and protect our self-worth. We, the people, are the leaders we've been waiting for. The creation of an empowered and enlightened country is still within our reach. □

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