

# 9/11 Psychology: Just How Resilient Were We?

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## ***TIME:***

9/11 was devastating in terms of lives lost — nearly 3,000 people were killed in the attacks — but it was not physically destructive (with the obvious exception of Ground Zero) on the same massive scale. Since most of New York City remained structurally intact, an intense focus was placed on the psychological needs of its residents (and, to a lesser extent, on residents of Washington, D.C.) One month after 9/11, the National Institute for Mental Health gathered together a group of international experts to figure out how to best help a traumatized population, but as a new report in *American Psychologist* explains, there was no clear model of what to expect and how to proceed.

“After reviewing the extant literature on postdisaster and posttraumatic interventions, panelists acknowledged that given inconsistencies and gaps in the literature base, a clearer framework for disaster behavioral response was needed,” write Patricia J. Watson and Melissa J. Brymer, both of the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress at UCLA, and George Bonanno of Columbia University in a special issue titled “9/11: Ten Years Later.”

At the time, the mental health community was flying blind, but the events unfolding before them have since taught us much about the long-term, psychological impact of mass violence. “In a way, 9/11 put trauma on the map and Americans psychologists started paying more attention to it and could actually study what was happening,” says George Bonanno, one of the authors who contributed to the special issue. “Before that, we really didn’t know how people would be affected on a population level.”

Read the whole story: [TIME](#)