

Traumatic Events

If you have been involved in a motor vehicle crash or other traumatic event, such as an assault, or if you have witnessed such an event; you may experience some strong physical and emotional responses.

In most cases these are normal and predictable responses to an abnormal experience.

These reactions may occur immediately after the event but sometimes they appear weeks or months later.

Recovery from a traumatic experience takes time – sometimes more time than is expected. Stress reactions may last a few days or weeks and occasionally longer.

If you feel uncomfortable, scared or anxious, take some long slow breaths and remind yourself that you are safe and the trauma is over.

If your reaction seriously disrupts your life or lasts for a prolonged period of time, seek professional assistance.

There are a wide range of reactions to a traumatic experience and each person reacts in his or her own way.

Some of the most common responses are listed below:

- Changes in sleep patterns or appetite
- Nervousness
- Irritability, “feeling on edge”
- Anger, “Why Me?”
- Sadness, crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Emotional numbness or withdrawal
- Guilt, Self-doubt
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling protective or fearful for the safety of yourself or your loved ones
- Avoiding activities, situations or places that remind you of the event
- Disturbing dreams
- Recurring thoughts or flashbacks about the event

Following a traumatic experience it is important to look after yourself.

These suggestions may help you cope.

- Remind yourself that your reactions are a normal result of trauma and will pass in time.
 - Eat healthy meals or snacks.
 - Restrict stimulants such as sugar, caffeine and nicotine.
 - Avoid alcohol, sedative or sleeping pills (they only dull the experience and delay recovery).
 - Take time for rest and relaxation. Try to maintain a regular schedule that allows for adequate amounts of sleep and activities that you enjoy.
 - Exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress. Get back to your regular exercise program or take up walking.
 - Seek opportunities to talk about your experience with people you trust.
 - Spend time with family and friends. You may want some time alone but isolating yourself may make the situation worse.
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