

Brief tips about self-care and self-help after a traumatic event.

Common reactions to traumatic event.

The following responses are normal and to be expected in the first few weeks:

- Emotional reactions such as feeling afraid, sad, horrified, helpless, overwhelmed, angry, confused, numb or disorientated.
- Distressing thoughts and images that just pop into your head
- Nightmares
- Disturbed sleep or insomnia
- Feeling anxious
- Low mood.

These responses are a normal part of recovery and are the mind's mechanism of trying to make sense and come to terms with what happened. They should subside over time.

What can people do to cope?

- The most helpful way of coping with an event like this to be with people you feel close to and normally spent time with.
 - If it helps, talk to someone you feel comfortable with (friends, family, co-workers) about how you are feeling. Talk at your pace and as much as you feel its useful.
 - Allow yourself to feel your emotions and cry if you need to. Letting feelings out is helpful in the long run. Don't 'bottle things up'.
 - Ask for emotional and practical support from friends, family, your community or religious centre.
- Try and return to everyday routines and habits. They can be comforting and help you feel less out of sorts.
- Look after yourself - eat and sleep well, exercise and relax.
 - Drinking alcohol can get in the way of your natural recovery so try not to drink too much.
 - Try to spend some time doing something that feels good and that you enjoy, even if it does not feel the same to start with
 - Be understanding about yourself and accept it may take a while to get back to normal.

When should a person seek more help?

- In the early stages, psychological professional help is not usually necessary or recommended.
- Many people recover naturally from these events. However, some people may need additional support to help them cope. For example, people who have had other traumatic events happen to them and people with previous mental health difficulties may be more vulnerable
- If about a month after the event anyone is still experiencing the following it is a good idea to visit their GP for advice:
 - Feeling upset and fearful most of the time
 - Acting very differently to before the trauma
 - Not being able to work or look after the home and family.
 - Having deteriorating relationship difficulties
 - Using drug or drinking too much
 - Feeling very jumpy and having nightmares a lot
 - Still not being able to stop thinking about the incidents
 - Still not being able to enjoy life at all.
- You may then be referred for counselling **Specialist trauma services**.
- Psychological interventions for trauma can vary but generally their aim is to enable people to come to terms with the traumatic event, by exploring feelings and fears, talking it through and helping people to develop coping mechanisms
- Medication can at times be recommended and be helpful in treating symptoms.



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