



TRAUMATIC STRESS

It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience some reaction when they have gone through a traumatic event. These stress reactions can affect individuals physically, mentally or emotionally. Stress reactions may appear immediately after a traumatic event or they may surface days or even months later. Reactions to a traumatic event are as unique and varied as the individual. With understanding and support, stress reactions become more manageable. Should symptoms persist, professional assistance from a counsellor or medical doctor may be necessary.

*Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation. When in doubt, contact a physician.

PHYSICAL

- sleep disturbances • thirst • headaches • weakness • dizziness • chills • rapid heart rate • vomiting • fatigue • nausea • muscle aches • visual difficulties • diarrhea • feeling uncoordinated • rapid breathing • difficulty in breathing • increased blood pressure • tremors (lips or hands)

EMOTIONAL

- Anxiety • fear • grief • sadness • denial • feeling isolated • numbness • guilt • depression • panic • feeling overwhelmed • irritability • loss of emotional control • feeling lost or abandoned • emotional outbursts

BEHAVIOURAL

- Withdrawal • intensified pacing • inability to rest • erratic movements • changes in speech pattern • change in social activity • increased alcohol consumption • change in usual communications • loss or increase in appetite

MENTAL

- Confusion • nightmares • hypervigilance • poor concentration • slowed thinking • poor attention span • uncertainty • disorientation • difficulty in making decisions • difficulty in problem-solving • heightened or lowered alertness • replaying/reliving the event over and over



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HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR VICTIMS

Rest more than usual.

Keep in contact with supportive friends/ family.

Have someone stay with you in the early stages.

Maintain your normal schedule as much as possible.

Eat regular meals, even if you don't feel like it.

As feelings arise, discuss them with people who love and support you.

Talk to people who love and support you.

Physical activity can be helpful in alleviating stress.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILY/FRIENDS

Listen attentively.

Spend time with the traumatized person.

Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if the victim has not asked.

Reassure the victim that they are safe.

Give the victim private time.

Let the victim know that you are sorry this event happened and you want to understand and be there for them.

Avoid saying phrases like "You're lucky it wasn't worse."

Do not take the victim's anger or other expressions of emotion personally.