

## Helpful hints

By using some of the following hints the reactions associated with a traumatic event may be relieved.

### *For yourself*

- contact friends
- have someone stay for a day or so
- recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal, don't try to fight them - they will decrease over time
- maintain a normal schedule
- eat well-balanced and regular meals
- try to keep up physical activity
- express your feelings as they arise
- talk to people who love you

### *For family members and friends listen carefully*

- spend time with the traumatised person
- reassure them that they are safe
- give them some private time
- tell them you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them
- don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- don't wait to be asked - offer to listen and help out
- don't tell them that they are 'lucky it wasn't worse' - traumatised people are not consoled by this

## You should seek help if -

- you are experiencing extreme feelings of distress, guilt or sadness, or distress that stops you doing day to day activities
- you continue to feel numb and empty and lack normal feelings
- you are experiencing emotional reactions that last longer than a few weeks
- you continue to have physical symptoms
- you continue to have nightmares or disturbed sleep
- you have no one with whom to share your emotions
- your relationships and work seem to be suffering or changed because of the trauma
- you are increasing the use of alcohol or drugs to cope
- you are having thoughts of self harm or suicide

## Where to get help

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 (24/7)
- **Kids Help Line:** 1800 551 800 (24/7)
- **Suicide Callback Service:** 1300 659 467 (24/7)
- **MensLine:** 1300 789 978 (24/7)
- **National Association of Loss and Grief**
- **Support Service:** 02 6882 9222
- **Beyond Blue Support:** 1300 224 636 (24/7)
- **Mental Health Line:** 1800 011 511 (24/7)
- Or see your General Practitioner(GP)



Adapted by HNE Mental Health Service.  
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Have you been  
impacted by a  
traumatic event?



# Trauma

## Normal reactions

*Trauma is a normal response to an abnormal event.*

When there has been a traumatic event individuals may have different experiences and be impacted in different ways.

It is normal to experience some emotional or physical reactions. They develop when you face severe stress, threat or loss and are responses which help you to cope.

They can be unpleasant and distressing.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event.

## Physical effects

### *Sleep*

- unable to sleep
- thoughts that keep you awake
- feeling tired and fatigued

### *Physical problems*

- Easily startled by noises
- General agitation and muscle tension
- palpitations, trembling and sweating
- breathing difficulties
- headaches, aches and pains
- nausea, diarrhoea or constipation
- many other physical signs

## Emotional effects

### *Shock*

- disbelief at what has happened
- numbness, sense of unreality

### *Anger*

- at who caused it or allowed it to happen
- at the injustice and senselessness of it
- general anger and irritability

### *Sadness*

- about human destruction and losses of every kind
- for loss of belief that our world is safe and predictable

### *Shame*

- for having appeared helpless or emotional
- for not behaving as you would have liked

*Letting out these common feelings allows nature to heal*

*The feelings usually last a short time and will lessen over the first few weeks*

## Thinking

### *Memories*

- frequent thoughts or images of the incident
- thoughts and images of other frightening events
- flashbacks or feelings of 'reliving' the experience attempts to shut out the painful memories

### *Dreams*

- dreams and nightmares about what happened
- other frightening dreams

### *Confusion*

- difficulty in making simple decisions
- inability to concentrate
- memory problems

## Behaviour

### *Social*

- withdrawal from others and a need to be alone
- easily irritated by others
- feeling detached
- loss of interest in normal activities and hobbies

### *Work*

- not wanting to go to work
- poor motivation
- poor concentration

### *Habits*

- increased use of alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs
- loss of interest in enjoyable activities
- loss of sexual interest