

Impacts of a Traumatic Event

Traumatic events can occur at any time or place. They are usually unexpected and can impact people differently. It may prove difficult to cope with a traumatic event without help.

Dealing with a traumatic event is difficult and knowing when and where to get help is important. People process emotions differently and getting help can be the first step in the right direction to begin healing.

Trauma affects people differently, and you may experience some common reactions. These signs and symptoms may begin immediately, or you may feel fine for days or even weeks, then suddenly be hit with a reaction. Although it may feel abnormal, it is very normal for people to experience emotional “aftershocks” following a traumatic event. Some common physical and emotional responses may include:

Physical reactions


- Difficulty sleeping.
- Fatigue, hyperactivity or “nervous energy.”
- Pain in the neck or back.
- Headaches.
- Racing heart or pains in the chest.
- Dizzy spells.
- Appetite changes.

Emotional reactions

- Flashbacks or “reliving” the event.
- Excessive jumpiness or tendency to be startled.
- Irritability.
- Anger.
- Feelings of anxiety or helplessness.
- Feeling vulnerable.

If you are concerned about your reaction, you should start to track the specific symptoms you are having. For each symptom, note the:

- **Duration**—Trauma reactions will grow less intense and disappear within a few weeks.
- **Intensity**—If the reaction interferes with your ability to carry on your life normally, you may want to seek help.



Focus on the important things first. It may take time to feel like you have regained control over your life. Make sure you are patient with yourself and with others.

Tips for coping after a traumatic event

As you are experiencing different emotions resulting from a traumatic event, there are a few things that could help you cope with these feelings:

- Physical exercise along with relaxation may help relieve the stress.
- Talk to people; it's one of the best ways to overcome trauma.
- Spend time with others. Resist the tendency to isolate yourself.
- Allow yourself to feel sad and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through sleepless nights.
- Get plenty of rest and eat a well balanced meal. Be sure to drink plenty of water too. Keeping your body well fueled will help with the healing process.

Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. They will decrease over time and become less painful.

It's important to understand and recognize that you are not alone and others might be having similar feelings that you're having. Reach out and talk to someone you know and trust. Overcoming a tragic event is difficult, painful and exhausting, but it shouldn't be lonely too. The first step to healing is understanding and talking about how you are feeling.