

Possible Reactions to Traumatic Events and Tragedies

Individuals exposed, directly or indirectly, to traumatic events experience a wide range of reactions during and after the event. Examples of traumatic events include injuries, assaults, robberies, fires, transportation accidents, natural disasters (*hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes and floods*), death of close friends, family and coworkers, and organizational crises.

Research in recent years into the reactions that people have to these experiences has shown that surviving such an event, or just witnessing the event, may cause very strong reactions. Some common reactions to traumatic events are listed:

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE
<i>Trouble falling, staying asleep</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Memory problems</i>
<i>Loss of appetite or nervous eating</i>	<i>Fear</i>	<i>Confusion</i>
<i>Stomach distress</i>	<i>Guilt</i>	<i>Difficulty making decisions</i>
<i>Startle responses</i>	<i>Irritability</i>	<i>Decrease in concentration</i>
<i>Sweating/Chills</i>	<i>Anger</i>	<i>Racing thoughts</i>
<i>Fatigue</i>	<i>Numbness</i>	<i>Intrusive thoughts, images</i>
<i>Neck/Backaches</i>	<i>Sadness</i>	<i>Flashbacks</i>

Not everyone will experience any or many of these reactions. If you do, it is important to remember that for most people these reactions will diminish over a few days to a few weeks. If not, please seek out additional support.

Suggested strategies to help ease these reactions:

- Spend time with people you know well, especially those who are good listeners.
- If it is difficult to talk to family or friends because you are concerned about their reactions, use other resources such as colleagues, clergy, and medical and behavioral health professionals.
- Try to limit a focus on “what ifs”
- Remain active and try to keep a regular schedule of activities.
- Take care of yourself physically: *eat healthy food, rest when tired and exercise*. Avoid mood-changing drugs and alcohol since such substances can interfere with healing. Medication should be used under a doctor’s supervision.
- If sleep is disturbed, do not toss and turn in bed. Get up, read, watch television or do hobbies.
- Do not try to force away thoughts, feelings or flashbacks. They will diminish in intensity in time.
- Try writing down memories and thoughts of the event. This may help you to return to normal sleep patterns.
- Use any other outlets that are of personal value to you: *religious practices, art, reading, movies, games, yoga, massage, pet care, hobbies, etc.*
- Let others be a support to you.

If you would like to talk, have questions or want information, call:



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