

Common Responses to Traumatic Events



Although trauma affects people differently, there are some common reactions that you may experience. These signs and symptoms may begin immediately, or you may feel fine for a couple of days or even weeks, and then suddenly be hit with a reaction.

The important thing to remember is that these reactions are quite normal, although you may feel some distress; you're probably experiencing a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

Some common responses to traumatic events

Physical Reactions

- Insomnia/nightmares
- Fatigue
- Appetite changes
- Pain in the neck or back
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations
- Pains in the chest
- Dizzy spells

Emotional Reactions

- Flashbacks or ?reliving? the event
- Excessive or jumpiness
- Irritability
- Anger
- Feelings of anxiety or helplessness
- Tendency to be startled

Effect on Productivity

- Inability to concentrate
- Increased incidence of error
- Lapses of memory
- Increase of absenteeism

Ways to Cope with Traumatic Events

1. Be tolerant of your reactions. They are normal and will likely subside with time. Acknowledge that it may be a while before you are entirely back to ?normal.?
2. Give yourself time. You may feel better and then have a ?relapse.? This is normal. Allow plenty of time to adjust.
3. Spend time with others, even though it may be difficult at first. It?s easy to withdraw when you?re hurt, but you may benefit from the company of others.
4. Talk about the experience with your friends. For most people, talking helps relieve intense emotions.
5. Try to maintain your normal routine. Familiar tasks can be a comfort and may help put some psychological distance between you and the event. Staying active helps

you focus on something other than the trauma.

6. Structure your time and stay organized. It's normal to forget things when you're under stress. Keep lists, and double-check any important work.
7. Maintain control where you can. Make small decisions, even if you feel that it's unimportant or you don't care.
8. Let the event activate you to do something about the causes of the trauma. For example, join groups that address related issues or look for ways to help others.
9. Ask for help if you are overwhelmed or notice your responses interfering substantially with your work, family or social life.
10. Take care of yourself. Eat, sleep and rest.



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