

Coping with a Traumatic Incident

Traumatic incidents are highly stressful events that occur unexpectedly and may threaten your physical or emotional well-being. Examples include accidents, robberies, assaults, sudden deaths, suicides, workplace violence, and other unexpected tragedies.

After a traumatic incident, it is normal to go through several stages of reaction. You may experience some of the following responses:

Shock Stage Immediately after a traumatic incident, you may experience shock. During this stage, you may:

- Not be aware of the extent of your injuries
- Feel numb, apathetic, or disoriented
- Feel stunned or dazed; in severe cases you may feel detached or have a blank stare
- Have difficulty making decisions or helping yourself or others

Suggestible Stage Minutes to a few hours later, you may:

- Be willing to follow simple directions from emergency personnel or others
- Be very concerned about the welfare of others involved in the incident
- Not be able to perform at your normal level or make important decisions
- Feel emotionally numb or unusually calm

Recovery Stage In the days following the incident, you may:

- Feel anxious, irritable, hypersensitive, or easily startled
- Feel a strong need to talk about the incident repeatedly
- Experience unwanted or intrusive memories of the event
- Have difficulty sleeping or changes in appetite
- Avoid places, people, or situations that remind you of the event
- Have difficulty concentrating or returning to normal routines

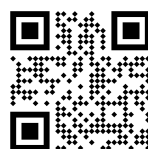


These reactions are common after a traumatic event and are a normal response to an abnormal situation.

Ways to Cope The following suggestions may help restore your emotional well-being after a traumatic event:

- Give yourself time to adjust and recover. This may be a difficult period, and recovery takes time.
- Engage in healthy behaviors. Eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of rest, and try to maintain regular routines.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs. Resist the urge to self-medicate emotional discomfort.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as stretching, deep breathing, prayer, meditation, or taking a warm bath.
- Talk about your experience. Talking with supportive friends, family, or trusted individuals can help you process difficult emotions.
- Seek professional support. If symptoms last more than 10 days, worsen, or include thoughts of harming yourself or others, contact REACH for professional support.

REACH EAP can provide confidential counseling, support, and referrals for trauma-related concerns.



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