

Coping With A Traumatic Incident

Traumatic incidents are stressful situations which happen out of the ordinary and threaten a person's well-being. Some examples are: accidents, robberies, assaults, deaths, suicides and other sudden human disasters. Those affected usually go through three stages and respond in the following ways:



Shock Stage

The initial response to a traumatic incident is shock and the affected person may:

- **Not be aware of the extent of their injuries.**
- **Be apathetic or disoriented**
- **Often appear stunned or dazed or, in severe cases, has a blank stare**
- **Not be able to make more than minimal efforts to help themselves or others**

Suggestible Stage

Minutes, or an hour or two later, the affected person is:

- **Suggestible and willing to take minimal directions from rescue workers or others**
- **Usually extremely concerned about the welfare of others involved in the incident**
- **Still not able to perform at a normal or safe level**

Recovery Stage

For days after, the affected person may:

- **Be apprehensive, hypersensitive, generally anxious, irritable or agitated**
- **Demonstrate the need to talk about the critical incident over and over again**
- **Have recurrent and intrusive memories of feelings about the incident**
- **Have sleep and appetite disruption**
- **Avoid situations, locations, feelings or thoughts associated with the event**

Ways to Cope

- **Give yourself time to adjust.**
- **Be patient and allow for time to grieve the losses you have experienced.**
- **Engage in healthy behaviors. Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest.**
- **Establish or reestablish routines such as eating or exercising at regular times.**
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs. Resist the urge to self-medicate emotional discomfort.**
- **Practice relaxation techniques. Stretching, take a warm bath, prayer and meditation.**
- **Communicate your experience. Telling and retelling the story of the incident to caring friends or family can be helpful in working through difficult feelings.**
- **Seek professional support. If symptoms last for more than 10 days or if there are thoughts of hurting self or others contact REACH for professional support.**

REACH can provide confidential counseling assistance and referral for trauma related concerns.