



Crisis Support Information

Traumatic and distressing events

Traumatic events include a wide variety of events that you might **experience** or **witness** that cause an intense acute stress reaction either because they are unexpected or extreme. They are outside of the range of normal everyday experience and would be acutely distressing to most people. Traumatic events are unexpected or sudden and include any event that is overwhelming and suddenly pushes us outside of our usual range of feelings and coping strategies. They can shake the foundations of our beliefs about safety and stability and may temporarily shatter for our assumptions of trust in others or our own abilities to cope.

It is normal to have very strong emotional reactions

It is normal to experience unfamiliar 'acute stress reactions' following a distressing event. Because they are so far outside what we would expect, these events provoke reactions that can feel scary and strange. Unfamiliar, unsettling and disturbing reactions are typical and expectable. By and large, these are normal responses to abnormal events.

Normal 'acute stress reactions' in the days, weeks and months following a traumatic event

Table 1 details the physical, cognitive and emotional reactions to stress

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional
Startle reactions	Flashbacks of the event - replaying the event or particular details of it in your mind	Anxiety or fear

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional
Panic	Preoccupation with the event	Shocked
Under/Over activity	Difficulty concentrating	Numb
Tension	Confusion	Hyper-vigilance –on guard
Nausea	Disorientation	Hard to switch off
Changes to appetite	Slowed thinking	Feeling helpless
Digestive problems	Difficulty making decisions	Very sensitive
Fatigue /exhaustion	Memory disturbance	Sadness
Sleep disturbance	Difficulty solving problems	Moodiness
Nightmares		Withdrawing and wanting to retreat
Dizziness		Worry about others
Muscle aches and pains		Anger
Headaches		

There is no set or correct pattern of recovering

Traumatic stress reactions may be immediate or emerge over time. They may last only a short period or for a few weeks or longer. Understanding your stress reactions and looking after yourself and/or getting support from others can help the reactions to pass.

Things that will help:

1. Keep your life as normal as possible.
2. Structure your time and stick to your usual routines.
3. Physical exercise alternated with periods of relaxation will help with the physical reactions.
4. Don't worry about your reactions they are normal and will change and fade.

5. Reach out to others and spend time with people you trust.
6. Allow some space and time for your reactions.
7. Avoid attempts to numb or cope with the distress with alcohol or drugs.

Seek help from us if:

- You are struggling to handle the intense feelings or bodily sensations and would like some support and guidance on coping strategies.
- Symptoms still persist beyond a month – six weeks after the event.
- You feel you need to talk about what happened with someone not personally involved with you.
- You are drinking, smoking or self-medicating to cope with symptoms.

Contact details

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