



COPING AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT: INFORMATION FOR THE COMMUNITY

If you have been involved in, or affected by, a traumatic event, then it is likely that you will suffer short-term effects. It is important to have access to accurate information to look after yourself and each other. This can help prevent longer-term difficulties. It can also help know when to seek professional help. Please see the link at the end of this document for information on supporting children and young people after a traumatic event. The information here is based on research and best-practice guidance.

Following a traumatic event, some emotions people may experience include:

- Fear
- Helplessness
- Increased alertness for danger
- Fatigue
- Intrusive thoughts or images of the event
- Nightmares
- Avoidance of places that may remind you of the event
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Memories of previous traumatic events

The above experiences are normal responses to making sense of traumatic events. While these feelings can be distressing, they will usually reduce over time.



Research shows that getting along with others in your community, being willing to cooperate with each other, and feeling connected to each other are related to lower levels of mental health difficulties in general. This can be especially important following a traumatic event. A variety of practical, emotional and social support from family, friends, colleagues and peers can be very powerful in helping to manage difficult experiences if you are affected by a traumatic event. Some things that might help include:

- Share your feelings with someone you feel comfortable with (friends, family, co-workers)
- Talk at your own pace and as much as you feel it's useful
- Be willing to listen to others who may need to talk about how they feel
- Take time to cry if you need to – letting feelings out is helpful
- Ask for emotional and practical support from friends, family members, your community or religious centre
- Try to spend some time doing something that feels good and that you enjoy
- Try to return to everyday routines and habits. They can be comforting and help you feel less out of sorts. Look after yourself: eat and sleep well, exercise and relax

Most people go on to recover fully over time through a natural healing process. However, you should consider seeking further advice from your GP or by calling 111 if:

- These experiences and feelings are overwhelming, stop you from enjoying life or stop you from doing the day to day activities you would normally do
- These experiences and feelings persist beyond 4 weeks

If you are **supporting children and young people** following a traumatic event, there are different ways to support them depending on their age. There is detailed advice here:

<https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-after-a-traumatic-event/>

For further information, please click here:

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/coping-after-a-traumatic-event>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/617321/nhs_trauma_leaflet.pdf