

Common Reactions to Trauma

Please recognize that experiencing any of these reactions can be normal and that, with time, there is a natural healing process that occurs. Over the next few days or weeks you may experience periods of:

- denial, shock, numbness
- helplessness, hopelessness
- feeling vulnerable, unsafe
- sadness, crying, despair
- anxiety, panic, worry
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability, anger, moodiness
- withdrawal, isolation
- being hyper-alert
- remembering other life traumas
- disturbing images
- confusion
- headaches, fatigue
- sleep disturbances

It is also not unusual to have no reaction at all.

How to Take Care of Yourself

People can take steps to help themselves, family members and each other cope with stress reactions. Here is a list of self-help suggestions.

1. Experience your feelings

You have the right to have feelings, even if you were not directly affected

2. Remind yourself that you are normal and having normal reactions

3. Talk is one of the most healing medicines

Talk about your feelings with others who feel safe to you such as your friends, family, work groups, student groups and residence hall members

4. Ensure that you maintain your regular routine

When we experience trauma, it can seem like we have lost control, therefore, it's important that you continue with your typical daily routine. This includes eating well, getting a good night's sleep, continuing with exercise, and ensuring you stay hydrated by drinking water regularly.

5. Be good to yourself

Spend time with people you care about and do things that make you feel better.



6. Remember that each person can experience trauma differently

You and others may have different needs at different times; try to be flexible

7. Don't make any big life changes

8. Remember that you are under stress

You may not act or react in a manner you would normally expect

9. Seek support from campus and community resources

Consult a mental health professional if you need assistance

10. For those who follow the news, be mindful of how the media reports affect you

While having information is helpful for some crises, some people may want to limit how much they read, listen to, or watch the news

11. For parents:

Children's reactions may include excessive fears, unwillingness to go to school, nightmares, and increases in regressive behaviors such as bedwetting and thumb sucking. Give your child an opportunity to ask questions, and respond in age-appropriate ways. Remember that your child may hear others talk about the trauma, and that without clear information; s/he can gain a distorted view of the crisis. Reassure your child by increasing physical contact, keeping in touch, and making plans to do things together.

Employee Assistance provides confidential, no cost, short-term counseling, assessment, and referrals for employees and their immediate family members, for any personal and work-related concern. Our services are completely voluntary and the program is staffed by licensed therapists. To schedule an in-person or telephone appointment, please call 510-643-7754.



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