

COMMON RESPONSES TO TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Although trauma affects people differently, there are some common reactions that you may experience. These signs and symptoms may begin immediately, or you may feel fine for a couple of days or even weeks, then suddenly be hit with a reaction. The important thing to remember is that these reactions is quite normal: although you may feel some distress, you're probably experiencing a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

Some common responses to traumatic events are listed below.

Physical reactions:

- Insomnia / Nightmares
- Fatigue
- Hyperactivity or "nervous energy"
- Appetite changes
- Pain in the neck or back
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations or pains in the chest*
- Dizzy spells*

Emotional reactions:

- Flashbacks or "reliving" the event
- Excessive jumpiness; easily startled
- Feelings of Apathy/Cynicism
- Irritability
- Anger/Crying
- Feelings of anxiety or helplessness

Effect on productivity:

- Inability to concentrate
- Increased incidence of errors
- Lapses of memory
- Increase in absenteeism
- Tendency to overwork

Usually, the signs and symptoms of trauma will lessen with time. If you are concerned about your reaction, note the specific symptoms that worry you.

*(*If you experience these symptoms, see a physician.)*

For each symptom, note the:

Duration. Normally, trauma reactions will grow less intense and disappear within a few weeks.

Intensity. If the reaction interferes with your ability to carry on your life normally, you may wish to seek help.

If you are concerned that your trauma response is too intense, or is lasting too long, please seek counseling. Your EAP, community health center, physician or priest, minister or rabbi may be able to refer you to a qualified counselor.

Whether you choose to seek counseling or not, the following tips can help you keep your life in order while you experience the trauma response:

- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible**, but don't overdo it. Cut out unnecessary "busyness" and don't take on new projects.
- Acknowledge that you'll be operating below your normal level** for a while.
- Structure your time** even more carefully than usual. It's normal to forget things when you're under stress.
- Maintain control where you can.** Make small decisions, even if you feel that it's unimportant or you don't care. It's important to maintain control in some areas of your life.
- Spend time with others**, even though it may be difficult at first. It's easy to withdraw when you're hurt, but now you need the company of others.
- Give yourself time.** You may feel better for a while, and then have a "relapse." This is normal. Allow plenty of time to adjust to the new realities.