

Post Traumatic Stress Reactions

Many symptoms and reactions can occur after experiencing a traumatic event. The presence of any of these signs of traumatic stress is part of the normal reaction to a very abnormal event. These are common reactions, and although painful, and are a part of the healing process. Many symptoms will subside after a period of time as you express your concerns and put the traumatic event into perspective. Some common traumatic stress symptoms and reactions include:

Physical	Thought Patterns	Emotional
Sleep disturbance	Concentration problems	Emotional numbness
Appetite changes	Intrusive recollections	Anxiety
Physical discomfort	Memory difficulties	Depression
Shock	Difficulty making decisions	Irritability
Restlessness	Angry thoughts	Withdrawal
Startle reactions	Disbelief	Loss of motivation
Hyper arousal	Sense of loss	Sense of vulnerability
Exhaustion	Nightmares	Emotional hypersensitivity
Inability to relax	Fearful thoughts	Fear
Fatigue	Self-blame	Sorrow and grief
	Flashbacks	Anger
	Violent fantasies	Low frustration tolerance
	Increased worry	Guilt
	Guilty thoughts	Feeling of loss
		Feelings of helplessness
		Avoidance

Stress Management & Coping Strategies After Traumatic Events

Express your thoughts and feelings about the event as often as necessary. Find people who are good listeners and talk.

Talk to family members about the event so you all can share a supportive view on the event.

Work towards accepting the traumatic event and its consequences.

Keep you daily life as normal as possible. Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.

Spend time with others who are supportive. Reach out – people do care. Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feeling with others.

Do things that feel good and increase feelings of self-control.

Find time to relax, exercise, and eat properly. Eat well-balanced and regular meals even if you do not feel like it.

Structure your time. Keep busy. Keep a journal-write your way through those restless maybe sleepless hours.

Be aware of numbing the psychological pain with overdose of drugs and alcohol.

Don't be frightened by traumatic stress reactions. You are normal and having normal reactions. Do not label yourself as "crazy."

Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. They decrease over time and become less painful.

Things to Remember

Wide range of reaction in yourself and in others. No one person reacts the same. There is no such thing as "normal" reaction to an overwhelming event. Expect a wide range of reactions in yourself and others. No one will react the same way at the same time or even to the same event.

You'll get by with a little help from your friends and family. Talking about your reactions, and the event itself, with people you are about and who care about you will help get through this difficult time. Reach out your hand to others along the way as well.

Exercise is helpful for your body and your emotional state.

Try to maintain your routine schedule, but don't force it. Don't be alarmed if your body won't cooperate. Your appetite and sleep habits may be off kilter for a bit as you begin the process of adjusting to the event. Caffeine and alcohol tend only to intensify your reactions.

Disturbing things like dreams and flashbacks are part of the process of readjustment. Although unpleasant, they help us to come to grips with what has happened. They will fade with time.

When it's all said and done, emerging with strength and focus from a challenging experience is all about our values...what we hold most dear; service, commitment, courage, family...Hold tight to these in the days and weeks to come as they will help steady you in the midst of the turmoil of readjustment.

Give yourself permission to ask for help from your family, your friends, your co-workers, and your supervisor, the E.A.P. (Employee Assistance Program). Seeking assistance is a sign of strength and resilience.

Recovery/reconstruction from an overwhelming incident doesn't occur at once. It is a process with no defines time limit. Some moments will be better than others, but most people find that in time they emerge stronger, ready to face the next challenge.