

Traumatic Events

A traumatic event changes how people live their daily lives. And for some, a traumatic event changes their lives forever. People feel a deep sense of pain when others lose their lives. For some, it's as if the loss was their own. They grieve with those who must go on without their loved ones. Everyone touched by a traumatic event struggles to regain physical, emotional and spiritual balance whether they've been affected firsthand, through people they know or by media coverage.

Reactions to Traumatic event

Grief is one reaction people may experience. It helps to understand that everyone grieves differently and at their own pace.

You may feel sad. You may be in shock and just sit and stare at nothing. Or you may experience many feelings in just a short period of time. You may:

- Not believe that the traumatic event is real.
- Feel angry, confused or frustrated.
- Blame yourself or feel there was something you could have done to keep the traumatic event from happening.
- Have depressed mood and feel hopeless.
- Accept that the event was real and that you can cope.

Let yourself feel all of your feelings so you can go through your grief fully. You may feel up one moment and down the next. But if you let yourself grieve, you'll feel better with time.

People also may experience considerable stress. It's important to be aware of how it can affect you and others who are close to you. Below are some signs of stress:

- Headaches, upset stomach or backaches
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs
- Increased Irritability, fatigue or exhaustion
- Being short-tempered
- Feeling overwhelmed or worrying excessively
- Relationship problems

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- Decreased energy, motivation or ability to feel pleasure
- Decreased concentration and increase in mistakes
- Trouble listening or communicating
- Being less organized
- Job- or school-related problems

Learning and using coping strategies can help you recover more quickly.

- Keep things in perspective by thinking about the event in a broader context – persisting through a hardship can help you learn and grow in a positive way.
- Lessen the time you spend seeking news about the event.
- Find out what assistance is available for you and your family.
- Be open to letting others help you.
- Connect with family, friends, coworkers, and church and organization affiliates.
- Stick with your daily routines – they provide comfort, and it will give you a feeling of stability when the world around you seems upside-down.
- Get proper rest, eat healthy, exercise and stretch your muscles.
- Remember and trust your ability to solve problems and make the right decisions.
- Renew your spirit through meditation, prayer or helping others in need.
- Relax by doing things you enjoy, such as reading, watching or playing sports, watching a movie, walking or listening to music.
- Ask for help if feelings overwhelm you and have an adverse affect on your relationships or job performance.

Sources:

Understanding Grief, The StayWell Company.

Tips for Survivors of a Traumatic Event, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.samhsa.gov.

This flier is offered for informational purposes only and is not intended as advice or as a substitute for professional care. It is an overview provided to stimulate dialogue.

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