



Taking care after a traumatic event.

If you are personally impacted by trauma and experience immense emotional pain, severe physical symptoms or have difficulty coping, talk to a health professional.

A traumatic event is any situation that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with their ability to function normally at work or at home.

How we react to specific events depends on many things. For example, personal proximity to this traumatic event, if you have previously experienced a traumatic event in your life, or if your present life circumstances are stressful or unstable, you may react more strongly than others. You may find that you have reactions even though you have not been directly involved in the incident.

If the traumatic event affects your entire workplace, you may find comfort in knowing that you are not alone in your feelings. The attitude and support of both colleagues and supervisors in the workplace can be a critical aid to recovery.

Different stages of coping.

1

Immediately after

Immediately after the experience, you are likely to be in shock, experiencing numbness and feeling out of touch with reality.

2

1 week on

You may become fearful and feel exhausted. This may last a few days or up to a week.

3

Longer term

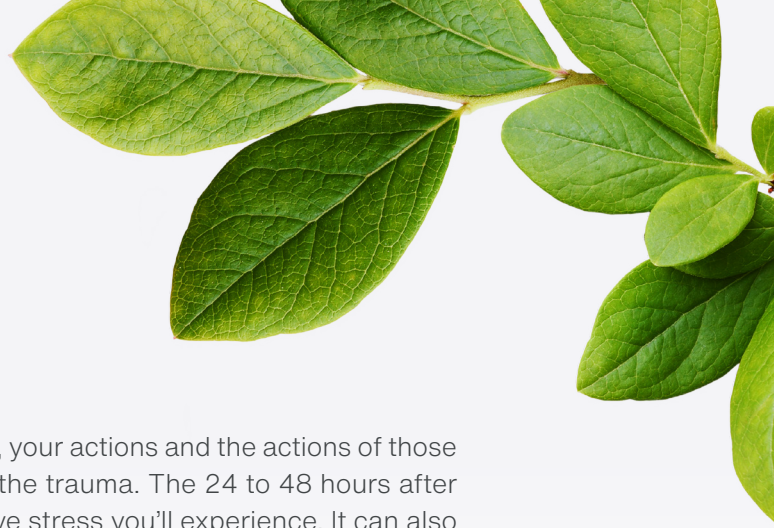
After a while, you may believe you have mastered your feelings, but later find that the same early emotions keep returning from time to time. Some people describe this feeling as though they are on an emotional roller-coaster. Gradually, feelings of fear decrease in intensity and return less frequently.

How you might feel after the initial shock subsides.

- Feelings may continue to be intense and unpredictable. Many people feel depressed or more irritable than usual.
- Repeated and vivid memories of the event are common. Some may experience recurring emotional reactions, like the sound of sirens, are common.
- There may be continued difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Sleep and eating patterns may be disrupted.
- Relationships may be strained and social withdrawal may occur.
- Physical symptoms may accompany the stress.
- It's common to feel exhausted for no particular reason.
- Feeling that the normal demands of work and home are overwhelming so you have time to collect your thoughts.
- Easily irritated by little things, such as noise.
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs, particularly in reaction to difficult emotions or for help in falling asleep.



Tools you can use.



When you are involved in or witness a traumatic event, your actions and the actions of those around you can be crucial in reducing the effects of the trauma. The 24 to 48 hours after an incident will ultimately affect the amount of reactive stress you'll experience. It can also impact the time needed to recover. While the effects of a traumatic event may sometimes last months or even years, there are some steps that can be taken immediately to help reduce the negative impact.

Here are some points to think about:

Re-establish a routine.

- Try to maintain a normal routine as much as possible. This will help you rebuild a sense of security and safety
- Eat food at regular mealtimes, even if you don't feel hungry. Aim for small helpings of nourishing foods
- If your sleep is disturbed, get up and do something
- Avoid major life decisions

Look after your mind and body.

- Cut down on caffeine and tobacco and avoid alcohol and drugs
- Reduce or limit your sugar intake. This will help you avoid the "slump" experienced after an already high-energy response
- Try to exercise in the first 24 hours
- Engage in activities you enjoy
- Keep a diary

Give yourselves time to heal.

Realize that emotional responses are normal reactions to a traumatic event. Whether you are angry, fearful, anxious, sad or disoriented, what you are experiencing is common.

Get support.

- Talk to others who have experienced a similar event
- Talk about your feelings with family and friends and share the above information with them so they can also understand your experience
- Join a local support group