

How a traumatic event can affect you

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.

Recognizing the normal and natural reactions to traumatic events is the first step to being able to cope with the personal aftermath of trauma. The following information will help you understand the reactions you may be experiencing right now and may encounter in the coming days and weeks, and includes helpful strategies to help you get through this challenging period.

Different stages of coping

- Immediately after the experience, you are likely to be in shock, experiencing numbness and feeling out of touch with reality.
- You may become fearful and feel exhausted. This may last a few days or up to a week.
- 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.

Common reactions

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- Difficult or broken sleep patterns
- Lack of energy for normal activities
- Difficulty concentrating on or remember everyday tasks
- Feeling that the normal demands of work and home are overwhelming so