

Self first-aid tips to help recover from the effects of trauma

Helpful tips:

- **WITHIN THE FIRST 48 HOURS engage** in appropriate physical care: eating well, exercising moderately (e.g., walking), drinking lots of water, coupled with relaxation alleviates some of the physical reactions.
- **Seek** out comfortable, familiar surroundings and people.
- **Do** things which feel good to you (e.g., funny movie, warm bath, hobbies).
- **Share** your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful, or if you don't want to talk try writing.
- Reactions from past events and transitions may re-emerge even though you may have felt those issues were resolved. This is **normal**.
- Give yourself **time** to recover. Difficulties with concentration, memory or decisions are common but short-term reactions.
- **Maintain** as normal a schedule as possible, making as many daily decisions as you can.
- **Focus** on concrete, easily-achievable, practical tasks.
- **Remember** symptoms will diminish in time.
- **Communicate** your needs clearly. Others may not know how to respond to you appropriately. Let them know which responses are helpful and which are not.

NOT Helpful tips:

- Making any big life changes.
- Excessive use of stimulants such as caffeine, sugar and nicotine and depressants such as alcohol.
- Blocking recollections.
- Spending too much time alone.
- Comparing or measuring your reactions to those of others
- Working too much or too little.
- Violence, conflict, or doing risky things.
- Blaming.

Common Reactions

Traumatic events can;

- unbalance our well-being and sense of security,
- impair our ability to function as usual.

Reactions may appear;

- immediately,
- in a few hours,
- days later, or,
- be delayed for weeks.

You may experience one or more of the following reactions:

Physical Responses

- Changes in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Muscle Tension
- Increased heart rate
- Stomach upset

Emotional Responses

- Shock or numbness
- Anger toward others involved
- Fear
- Depression
- Guilt/Frustration
- Sadness
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Loneliness

Mental Responses

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering details of event

Behavioural Responses

- Withdrawal from others
- Irritability and angry outbursts
- Crying
- Decreased energy/ambition
- Marital/relationship conflict
- Increased use of alcohol or medications

Remember Each person's reaction is unique and personal.

Tips for Supporting Others:

Your support and understanding makes a significant contribution to recovery.
You could try:

- Acknowledge the event and their reactions.
- Try to control your responses, being sensitive to their needs. Remember its about them.
- Listen carefully and let them set the pace, don't ask a lot of questions.
- Spend time with the traumatized person, reassuring them that they are safe. Give them some private time too.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help. In most cases, people need someone to hear them out, not necessarily to make it better.
- Give them practical support. Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for family, minding children.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". Traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you ask what you can do to assist them.

How fseap can help

Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counsellor may be necessary.

This does not imply "craziness" or weakness.

It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves. In fact, asking for help is a healthy sign of strength.

**Call fseap for support 24/7/365
1.800.667.0993**

Calm the body.....

Calm the mind.....

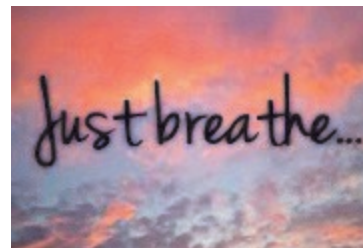
Your mind, body and emotions are "wired" after a traumatic event. Your body's natural survival instinct has kicked in and prepared your body to fight or flight for survival.

Blood is pumping to your heart to power you to fight or run (flight), your brain has disconnected from the frontal cortex (your thinking brain) and is consumed only with the trauma and survival.

Taking a deep breath into the body slows down the heart rate and consequently has the effect of turning off the flight or flight response.

Focusing on breathing will;

- relax the body,
- calm your emotions and,
- help to quiet and focus the mind.



Try Counting Breath:

- Focus your attention on your breathing.
- Count numbers in your head as you breathe in and out: "IN, 1, 2, OUT, 1, 2, 3, 4, IN, 1, 2, OUT, 1, 2, 3, 4."
- Continue for at least 5 breaths in and out.

Try Deep Sigh:

- Focus your attention on your breathing.
- Breathe in and push the air down deep in to your tummy.
- As you breathe out sigh deeply letting all the air out of your mouth.
- Continue for at least 5 breaths in and out.