

COPING WITH TRAUMA

Common Reactions to Trauma

Physical Responses

- Change 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
- Anxiety

Mental Responses

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering details of event

Behavioral Responses

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry Outbursts
- Crying
- Irritability
- Decreased energy/ambition
- Marital/relationship conflict
- Increased use of alcohol or medications
- Fear of being alone

Stress Management Tips

- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and resting when needed. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and nicotine and depressants such as alcohol.
- Seek out comfortable, familiar surroundings and avoid spending too much time alone.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful -- don't try to block recollections. It helps to talk about them. Feel free to set boundaries with people who have not been helpful in the past.
- Don't be anxious if reactions from past traumas re-emerge even though you may have felt those issues were resolved.
- Give yourself time to recover. Difficulties with concentration, memory or decision-making are common but short-term reactions. Seek help if reactions are interfering with job responsibilities. Focus on concrete, easily achievable tasks.
- Remember that difficulty sleeping, nightmares, flashbacks, and feelings of being "hyper-alert" are common and will diminish in time.
- Avoid personalizing or taking responsibility for how others respond to the traumatic event. Do not compare or measure your reactions to those of other people-- each individual's experience is unique and personal.
- Communicate your feelings clearly. Others may not know how to respond to you appropriately. Let them know which responses are helpful and which are not.
- Know that anniversary dates or a specific holiday may trigger feelings related to the trauma. This is normal.
- Seek help from a professional counselor if symptoms persist.

If you feel you need further assistance call:

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