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.
- You become detached from the event and begin to feel that you are coping well.

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Common reactions

Some common reactions can include:

- Feeling exhausted for no particular reason
- 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
- 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

Learning to cope

Be sure you take good care of yourself. Do your best to:

- Engage in activities you enjoy
- Spend time with good friends and loved ones
- Eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest
- Exercise regularly and listen to your body's needs
- Refrain from using cigarettes, alcohol and drugs
- Talk to others who have experienced a similar event
- Reach out to spiritual leaders and doctors who can also provide good sources of support
- Talk about your feelings with family and friends and share the above information with them so they can also understand your experience
- Talk to others who experienced the event as they may have similar feelings and insight

These reactions are normal.

Remember that wherever you are, your confidential **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)** is available and accessible 24/7/365.

Contact your EFAP at **1.844.880.9142** or visit **workhealthlife.com**.

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