# Taking care after a traumatic event

**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.**

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.

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.

## Tips and tools you can use

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

- Try to maintain a normal routine as much as possible. This will help you rebuild a sense of security and safety.
- Try to exercise within the first 24 hours.
- 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.
- Eat food at regular mealtimes, even if you don't feel hungry.
- Aim for small helpings of nourishing foods.

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- If your sleep is disturbed, get up and do something.
- 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.

## You and your family

- Give yourselves time to heal.
- Ask for support from your family and friends.
- Keep a diary.
- Join a local support group.
- Establish or re-establish your routines.
- Avoid major life decisions.
- Become knowledgeable about the feelings you'll likely encounter as time goes by.

## Reactions 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.
- There may be continued difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Sleep and eating patterns may be disrupted.
- Recurring emotional reactions, like the sound of sirens, are common.
- Relationships may be strained.
- Social withdrawal may occur.
- Physical symptoms may accompany the stress.

## 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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