

What is a traumatic event?

Traumatic events are often frightening or shocking. They are commonly outside the range of 'normal' experience and can be sudden, overwhelming, unexpected, threatening and may include loss.

When a young person is affected

When a young person (or a person close to them) experiences a traumatic event, their reactions can be similar to that of an adult, although due to their age, they do not always possess the ability to express these new feelings.

Common reactions

Individuals react to trauma in very different ways. If you **have** witnessed or been involved in a traumatic event like the ones described above, you may notice changes in how **you** feel (emotionally and physically), think and behave.

Behaviours

- Acting out
- Aggression
- Distress
- Disturbed sleep
- Isolation
- Misbehaving
- Startled easily

Feelings

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Helplessness
- Lack of safety
- Sadness
- Worry

Physical

- Change of eating and appetite
- Chills
- Difficulty sleeping and change of sleeping patterns
- Dizziness
- Easily startled
- Headaches
- Hyperventilation (fast, deep breathing)
- Increased heart rate
- Muscle ache
- Sickness and diarrhoea
- Sweating
- Tiredness
- Trembling
- Visual disturbances (surroundings look unfamiliar)

Thoughts

- Blame
- Preoccupied
- Revenge

These are all normal reactions to a traumatic event: they do not mean that you **are** going mad, coping badly, or not being 'strong' enough.

Some people experience a number of these reactions, some only a few. Some people are quite numb at first, and it takes a few days or even weeks for them to feel the impact of what has happened.

To begin with you may find it hard to get what **you** have seen or experienced out of **your** head. Although this is very distressing, it is a natural response as **your** mind tries to make sense of what has occurred.

Reactions to a traumatic event may initially be very strong and may make it difficult to get on with everyday life. For many people, however, the memories and feelings gradually become less intrusive over time.

What can you do to help?

Keep to usual routines – but be flexible in your expectations.

To talk or not to talk – in general it is good to talk about **your** feelings, **reactions** and thoughts with **someone you trust**. However, you may not feel comfortable with this. It may be that **you** would prefer to talk to someone outside of **your** family and friends eg others who were there at the incident; **clergy or professional support**. See further help at the back of this leaflet.

Activities – carry on with **your** normal social activities, hobbies or sport etc. This will help to keep **your** mind off of the traumatic experience and help manage stress levels.

Balanced diet – eat a balanced diet and include your favourite foods although limit sugar and caffeine intake as they can increase overall stress levels.

Humour – it is okay to use humour when it is natural to do so. This can help lighten the situation.

Be assured – with time and care young people can make a full recovery from trauma. Treatment is available if **you** need it (see further help at the back of this leaflet).

Psychological aspects

Allow your mind to follow its natural recovery pattern by:

- letting **yourself** think about the trauma when prompted to do so.
- continue to go to the places you normally go to, even if it causes unpleasant memories.
- recognising **your** reactions to trauma as natural and normal.
- recognising that any self-criticism or guilt **you** may feel are common aspects of post trauma reactions.
- expressing **you** feelings when it is safe to do so.
- noticing how the reactions gradually reduce in intensity.
- being pleased with **yourself** for getting through a difficult time.
- **understanding that** outside events may slow down the recovery process eg media coverage, new information about the event, anniversaries etc.

Further help

British Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org.uk>

Regional: 0115 852 8000

Child Bereavement Trust

<http://www.childbereavement.org.uk>

Support and Information Line: 01494 446648

Cruse - Bereavement Care

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk>

National: 0844 477 9400

Chesterfield/NE: 01246 550080

Samaritans

<http://www.samaritans.org.uk>

National: 08457 90 90 90

Chesterfield: 01246 270000

Derby: 01332 364444

The Trauma Clinic

<http://www.traumacclinic.org.uk>

National: 020 7323 9890

The Compassionate Friends

<http://www.tcf.org.uk>

Helpline: 0845 1232304

Treetops Hospice Care - counselling and emotional support services

<http://www.treetopshospice.org.uk>

Risley: 0115 949 6944

Victim Support

<http://www.victimsupport.com>

National: 0845 30 30 900

Regional: 01629 825864

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

National: 08452 03 04 05

Alternatively, contact your General Practitioner (GP), who will be able to refer you to a specialist service if necessary.

Young adults (18-25 years) - how to cope after a traumatic event

The purpose of this leaflet is to assist readers in recognising and managing common reactions to a traumatic event

This leaflet has been produced in consultation with