

Coping with a Traumatic Event

Many people experience a traumatic event during their lifetime. A traumatic event involves exposure to actual or possible death, serious injury, or physical or sexual violence. You don't have to experience the event directly to be affected. You can witness it or simply hear about it happening to someone you love. People generally recover from the stress of a traumatic event. However, the period of recovery can be difficult. Here are some things to keep in mind if you've experienced trauma.

Common reactions

After a traumatic event, it's not uncommon to experience sadness, anxiety, irritability, or other strong emotions. You may also have cognitive responses, such as confusion, painful memories, and self-blame. You may have physiological responses, such as fatigue and difficulty sleeping. You might discover that your relationships are affected – you may have trouble getting along with some people and feel disconnected from others. It's important to remember that people respond to trauma in a variety of ways, and whatever you are experiencing is likely a normal part of the recovery process.

Recovering from a traumatic event

Rely on your resources

You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Remind yourself of the people and strategies you customarily rely on to deal with stress. Think about the friends you talk with, the activities you engage in, and the helpful things you tell yourself when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Be patient with yourself

Be kind to yourself, seek support from people in your life, and remind yourself that what you're experiencing is temporary and normal.

Take care of your body

Our bodies have an enormous impact on our moods. Eat well, exercise regularly, and maintain a stable sleep schedule. Minimize your use of alcohol, caffeine, and other substances.

Connect with family, friends, and community

Experiencing a traumatic event can leave you feeling alone and disconnected. It's important to reach out to your support system – the family, friends, and communities who mean the most to you. Surround yourself with people you love.