



TRAUMA RECOVERY GUIDELINES

Overview

You have encountered a stressor outside the realm of usual human experience. As a victim of this type of stress, you can expect to experience the after effects to varying degrees. The acknowledgment of these emotional reactions helps to shorten recovery time and prevent complications through the natural healing process.

Expected Emotional Reactions

- Sense that life is out of balance
- Disbelief, numbness
- Flashbacks
- Heightened response to noise, surprises; jumpiness
- Uncomfortable being alone
- Sadness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Anger, irritability
- Difficulty making decisions and thinking creatively
- Forgetfulness
- Physical discomfort, aches, cold-like symptoms
- Feeling guilty that others have suffered more than you have
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of being “out of control”
- Fears of “going crazy”
- Recall of past trauma and loss
- Loss of feeling secure in the world
- Self doubt
- Magical thinking, superstition and omens

These reactions are generally temporary. They can vary widely from one day to the next. Don't be alarmed by the re-emergence of emotional feelings after days, weeks or months. If you have been busy performing necessary tasks after the crisis, you may have a delay in your reaction until you stop being busy. If the reactions persist or cause you extreme discomfort, you should contact a mental health professional.

Self-help Techniques

- Don't push thoughts and memories of the event away; it is critical to talk about them. Talk with interested listeners about experience, reactions and feelings.
- Don't feel embarrassed about a repetitious need to talk to people.
- Plan extra time to do usual tasks. You may be distracted and not be able to function as efficiently as usual.
- Keep your life in balance:
 - Eat smart
 - Balance your work with rest
 - Avoid new projects in life
 - Keep a familiar routine with familiar people and surroundings
 - Give yourself a break

Additional Consultation

Do not hesitate to contact a mental health professional whenever the following events occur:

- When you or your family have any questions regarding what you are feeling
- If you notice any significant changes in family patterns
- If you are suddenly experiencing physical aches or pains or the aggravation of physical illness. (Check with your physician first; you might be expressing emotional discomfort through your body.)
- Whenever your normal sleep is significantly disrupted
- If you are bothered by persistent sadness, irritability or nervousness
- If substance abuse occurs

Give yourself time to let the normal healing process unfold. If a gradual reduction in symptoms does not occur, call for assistance.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselors are ready and able to help you and your eligible family members who would like counseling as a result of this crisis. Use of the EAP is confidential and initial sessions are pre-paid. For assistance, call MHN.