

Emotional Trauma Information Sheet

*Remember, what is
happening to you is ...*

a Normal Reaction to an Abnormal Event



Traumatic Stress Reactions

Over the next few weeks, you may experience some of the following reactions to the incident you have been involved in. These reactions may include:

Physical Reactions:

- Change in sleep pattern
- Nightmares
- Being easily startled
- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Hyperactivity
- Underactivity
- Health problems (eg change in appetite, headaches, digestive problems)
- Change in sexual behaviour

Thinking Reactions:

- Flashbacks
- Difficulty with concentration and decision making
- Memory disturbance
- Inability to attach any importance to anything other than the incident

Emotional Reactions:

- Fear, anxiety, guilt, depression
- Emotional numbing, grief
- Feelings of helplessness
- Over-sensitivity
- Over-protection of self and family
- Mood swings
- Anger - which may be manifested by
 - Scapegoating
 - Irritability
 - Frustration with bureaucracy
 - Violent fantasies
- Feeling isolated from or different from other people

See www.csu.edu.au/division/hr/staff-concerns/risk-management2

Dealing with your Reactions

These feelings, however painful, are a normal part of the healing process. However, there are things you can do to reduce their impact.

Things to try:

- Within the first 24-48 hours, periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation, will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time - keep busy - go out even if you do not really feel like it.
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions - do not label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people - it is the best healing medicine.
- Be wary of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs and alcohol. This can just make the reactions worse.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Keep your life as normal as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by checking out how they are doing.
- Realise you will have good days and not-so-good days - that is normal.
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Realise that those around you are also under stress, including family members.
- Eat nourishing, well balanced meals.
- Do not attempt important life changes.
- Do make as many daily life decisions as possible, to have a feeling of taking control of your life