

## HELPFUL HINTS

### For family, friends, colleagues

- Listen carefully, don't try and solve every issue which emerges. Just listening helps.
- Spend time with the person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them but do not force them to talk.
- Help them with every day or routine tasks – it may take time for them to readjust.
- Allow them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are 'lucky it wasn't worse' or 'you will get over it', or 'pull yourself together'.
- Instead tell them that you want to understand and assist them as and when they would like you to.

If you need personal support or guidance on how best to help yourself or someone else, then get in touch with your organisation's welfare department; your line manager and/or your GP. Use other 'ordinary' sources of support such as friends and colleagues.

It's worth remembering that most people recover from a traumatic event and it's important to take each day as it comes, especially at first. Getting back to whatever was normal for you before the traumatic event is also important as is gently beginning to focus on what you are going to do next.

However, if you still feel distressed or are having problems getting through each day after a month or so, don't be afraid to ask for help.



## Remaining Resilient after traumatic events

A post incident guide for you,  
your family and friends



# Common stress-related symptoms

Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

Physical	Thoughts	Emotional	Behavioural
● Fatigue	● Blaming someone	● Anxiety	● Change in activity
● Nausea	● Confusion	● Guilt	● Change in speech
● Muscle tremors	● Poor attention	● Grief	● Withdrawal
● Twitches	● Poor decisions	● Denial	● Emotional outbursts
● Chest pains**	● Heightened or lowered alertness	● Severe panic (rare)	● Suspiciousness
● Difficulty breathing**	● Poor concentration	● Fear	● Poor communication
● Increased blood pressure	● Memory problems	● Uncertainty	● Increased alcohol intake
● Rapid heart rate**	● Difficulty identifying familiar things or people	● Depression	● Inability to rest
● Thirst	● Poor problem solving	● Feeling overwhelmed	● Antisocial acts
● Headaches**	● Loss of person, place or time orientation	● Intense anger	● Intensified startle reflex
● Visual difficulties**	● Grinding Teeth	● Irritability	● Pacing
● Vomiting	● Weakness	● Being extra vigilant	● Erratic movements
● Dizziness	● Profuse sweating	● Flashbacks	● Agitation
● Chills	● Shock**		● Apprehension
● Fainting**			

\*\* These symptoms may indicate a need for medical evaluation by a General Practitioner.

You have been given this leaflet because you have experienced a traumatic incident or repeated exposure to potentially traumatic events\*. Traumatic events are ones which have the potential to interfere with your ability to function correctly and while most people recover well from such events, it would not be unusual if you are now experiencing, or later experience, some strong emotional or physical reactions. Don't forget it is very common and quite normal for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have experienced a traumatic event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event; however sometimes it may take time (days or even weeks) for them to emerge. While not everyone will notice their own distress, it is not uncommon for people who know them well (such as family, colleagues or friends) to recognise that they "behave differently".

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last days, weeks, months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support from your colleagues and your family and friends, stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, however, professional help may be necessary and your organisation can give you the guidance you need to get the right help.

Needing professional help does not imply instability or weakness. In fact getting help is a sign that you are taking your health seriously. Keeping yourself mentally healthy is as important as keeping yourself physically healthy.

\*The advice in this leaflet is relevant for those who may be suffering as a result of either Type 1 trauma (exposure to a single 'major' traumatic incident) or Type 2 trauma - repeated, often occupationally related, exposure to potentially traumatic events. Type 2 traumas can have an insidious effect with deterioration in mental health occurring over a period of time, rather than an 'all of a sudden' reaction which can follow Type 1 traumas.

## SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOU

- Spend time with friends, family and people you trust.
- Re-occurring thoughts, dreams and flashbacks are normal at first – don't try to fight them, they will decrease over time and become less problematic.
- Maintain/re-establish as normal a routine as possible.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even when you don't feel like it).
- Try to keep a reasonable level of activity (exercise is good for your mental health).
- Fight against boredom.
- Express your feelings as they arise to people that you trust.
- But remember, you don't have to tell everyone everything.