

Significant Events Information Sheet

Helpful Hints for Coping

You have experienced an event (eg. witnessed something, heard some news) that may produce some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite **normal**, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have experienced a significant event.

Sometimes the emotional after-shock (or stress reaction) appears immediately after the event. Sometimes it may appear a few hours or days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reaction appears.

The signs & symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months (and occasionally longer), depending on the severity of the event. With understanding and the support of family, friends and colleagues, the stress reaction usually passes more quickly. Occasionally the event is so painful that professional assistance from a counsellor may be necessary. This does not imply 'craziness' or 'weakness'. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage themselves.

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

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>
Nausea	Slowed thinking	Anxiety
Upset stomach	Difficulty making decisions	Fear
Tremors (lips, hands)	Difficulty in problem solving	Guilt
Feeling uncoordinated	Confusion	Grief
Profuse sweating	Disorientation (eg. to place & time)	Depression
Diarrhoea	Difficulty calculating	Feeling lost
Dizziness	Difficulty concentrating	Feeling abandoned
Chest pain (seek medical help)	Memory problems	Feeling isolated
others	Difficulty naming common objects	Worrying about
Rapid heart beat	Seeing the event over & over	Wanting to hide
Rapid breathing	Distressing dreams	Anger
Increased blood pressure	Poor attention span	Irritability
Headaches	Flashbacks	Feeling numb
Muscle aches		Startled
Sleep disturbance		Shocked

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DRAKE
WORKWISE

Some of the following hints may help to alleviate the stress associated with a traumatic event.

For Yourself

- Try to rest a bit more (than usual)
- Contact friends
- Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or periods of a day so
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time & become less painful
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Eat well balanced & regular meals (even when you don't feel like it)
- Try to keep a reasonable level of physical activity – it is often helpful
- Fight against boredom
- Express your feelings as they arise
- Talk to people who love you
- Find a good counsellor if the feelings become prolonged or too intense

For Family Members & friends

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the person
- Offer your assistance & a listening ear, even if they have not asked for help
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Help with everyday tasks (eg. cooking, cleaning, minding children)
- Give 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" – traumatised people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred & you want to understand & assist them

If the symptoms described above persist please call 1300 135 600 or your dedicated DWW 1800 number