



Traumatic Events | *Tip sheet*

# Common Responses to Traumatic Events

Traumatic events can cause a variety of reactions, and usually affect people differently. Sometimes reactions happen immediately after experiencing or hearing about an event. You may feel fine for a number of days, even weeks, and then suddenly have a reaction. These reactions can last for a few days, weeks or sometimes months, depending upon your experience of the situation and/or your relationship with those who were involved with the traumatic event. Traumatic events can also have a ripple effect – family members, friends and co-workers may also be affected.

**It is important to remember that having some reaction is normal.** Victor Frankl, a Nazi concentration camp survivor and author once said that “an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior” (1951). Some of these normal reactions include.

## Physical Reactions

- Disrupted sleep, nightmares
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Headaches
- Appetite disturbance
- Body pains (back, neck, stomach, etc.)

## Emotional Reactions

- Heightened state of fear and vulnerability
- Anger
- Being easily startled
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Trouble concentrating
- Short term memory loss
- Irritability
- Withdrawal from normal activities
- Feeling detached from others
- Guilt
- Intrusive flashbacks or recollections about the event

## Things That You Can Do

- Maintain a normal and predictable routine for yourself and your family.
- Structure your time and keep busy.



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