

## When To Seek Professional Help

1. If your symptoms have failed to improve after a few months.
2. If, after a few weeks, you still feel numb and your feelings are detached.
3. If you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep.
4. If you have no one with whom to share your feelings and you feel a need to do so.
5. If your relationships seem to be suffering badly, or if sexual problems develop.
6. If you have accidents.
7. If you continue to smoke, drink or take drugs to excess.
8. If your work performance suffers.
9. If you are worried that those around you are particularly vulnerable or are not healing satisfactorily.
10. If as a helper you are suffering exhaustion.

**Effective treatment for emotional trauma aims to enable people to come to terms with the traumatic event, by exploring feelings and fears, talking and developing coping mechanisms.**

**Do remember that you are basically the same person that you were before the incident took place.**

**Do remember that gradually you will begin to feel better.**

**Do remember that if you suffer too long, professional help is available.**

## Do Not Hesitate To Seek Professional Help

Contact your GP directly for guidance and support. They can refer you for counselling or other help.

Other useful numbers:

### **NHS 111**

Tel: 111

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Other contact numbers and websites:

### **Victims Support** (support to victims of crime)

Tel: 0845 30 30 900

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### **Samaritans** (24hr helpline for those in crisis)

Tel: 01483 505555 or 01372 375555

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### **Cruse** (bereavement care, counselling & support)

Tel: 0870 167 1677

[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

### **Disaster Action** (post disaster support & guidance)

Tel: 01483 799066

[www.disasteraction.org.uk](http://www.disasteraction.org.uk)

### **Assist Trauma Care** (telephone counselling & support following trauma)

Tel: 01788 560800

[www.assist-trauma-care.co.uk](http://www.assist-trauma-care.co.uk)

### **Childline** (telephone helpline for young people)

Tel: 0800 1111

Other useful local numbers:

**Adult Social Care:** 0300 200 1005

**Surrey County Council:** 03456 009 009

Surrey and Borders Partnership   
NHS Foundation Trust

# COPING WITH EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

This is a brief, general information leaflet. The aims of the leaflet are:

1. To provide information on how individuals may expect to feel in the time following a traumatic or violent incident.
2. Advice on the best ways to take care of yourself during this time.
3. Contact details of professional organisations where further advice can be sought.



When faced with a major trauma or personal crisis, it is common to experience strong emotional and physical reactions. This is normal and is the way in which your mind and body comes to terms with what has happened.

### Normal feelings you may experience:

Each person's response to a crisis is different and feelings may vary in intensity and last for different amounts of time. The following are just some of the reactions you may be experiencing:

#### Fear & Anxiety

- of effects on oneself & others
- of a similar event happening
- of being alone or having to leave loved ones

#### Guilt

- for things you should have done or haven't done

#### Shame

- about the way you feel
- about needing support, being vulnerable

#### Anger

- at what happened
- at the lack of understanding by others
- at the lack of response from others

#### Memories

- of love for other people in your life who have died at other times or other past traumatic events
- of feelings (or flashbacks), sometimes long forgotten

#### Helplessness

- overwhelmed by what's happened
- crises expose human weakness, as well as strength

**WARNING – Accidents are more common after severe stress so do be more careful.**

Nature heals through allowing these feelings to come out. This will not lead to loss of control but stopping these feelings may lead to other and possibly more complicated problems.

**Do remember, crying can give relief and help you think more clearly. Try to cry with someone else rather than on your own.**

### Physical and mental sensations:

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, fuzziness of mind including loss of memory and concentration, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty breathing, choking in the throat and chest, nausea, diarrhoea, muscular tension which may lead to pain. e.g. headaches, neck and backaches, abdominal pain, tummy ache, menstrual disorders, change in sexual interest.

#### Numbness

Your mind may allow the misfortune to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly as being strong or uncaring.

#### Activity

Helping others may give you some relief.

#### Reality

Facing the reality when possible, talking and dealing with problems will help you come to terms with the event. As you allow the incident more into your mind, there is a need to think about it, and you may have recurring dreams about it. Children will often play and draw the event.

#### Support

It can be a relief to receive other people's physical and emotional support. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can help. Also, let your employers know what has happened. Larger companies will have support available for staff. If you belong to a particular faith you might find support there.

#### Privacy

In order to deal with feelings, you may find it necessary at times to be alone, or just with family and close friends.

### Family And Social Relationships:

New friendships and relationships may develop as a result of a traumatic incident. However, on the other hand strains in existing relationships may occur. For example you may feel that too little or the wrong things are offered, or you cannot give as much as is expected.

### Some Dos and Don'ts

**Don't bottle up feelings.** Do express your emotions and let children share your grief.

**Don't avoid talking about what happened.** Do take every opportunity to review the experience.

**Avoid drugs and alcohol** – this can help numb your feelings but can stop you coming to terms with what has happened.

**Do be patient with yourself** – it may take weeks or months to learn to live with what has happened.

**Don't expect memories to go away** – the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.

Don't forget that **children experience similar feelings.**

Do **take time out to sleep, rest, think** and be with those important to you.

**Do express your needs** clearly and honestly.

Do try to **keep your life as normal as possible** after the acute grief.

Do **let children talk** about their emotions and express themselves in games and drawings.

Do **send children back to school** and let them keep up their activities.

Do **drive more carefully.**

