

Coping with Crisis

When unexpected, traumatic events occur, it is normal to have strong physical and emotional reactions. Sometimes these appear immediately after the events, and sometimes they don't begin for several days, weeks or even months. While unpleasant, these reactions are normal and usually temporary, leaving no long-term effects on the individual experiencing them.

How strongly the event impacted the individual determines his or her response afterward, as do the person's past experiences, values, attitudes, beliefs and personal support systems.

Some of the wide range of normal responses are listed below.

EMOTIONAL	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	BEHAVIORAL
Anxiety	Fatigue	Confusion	Isolation
Fearfulness	Twitching	Forgetfulness	Increased alcohol use
Numbness	Nausea	Distractibility	Increased drug use
Uncertainty	Headache	Impaired memory	Restlessness
Depression	Sleep problems	Poor judgment	Jumpiness
Anger problems	Sweating	Poor concentration	Interpersonal problems
Guilt	Dizziness	Flashbacks	Appetite changes
Irritability	Intestinal problems	Past traumas remembered	Sleep disturbances
Grief	Breathing problems	Intrusive thoughts	Reduced sex drive
Vulnerability	Nightmares	Outbursts	
Disbelief	Suspiciousness		

While each of these can be an expected response to a crisis, there are things that can be done to reduce their impact and to help restore normal feeling and functioning.

- Remember you are normal and experiencing an expected, temporary response to a traumatic event. Healing from any injury takes time.
- Probably the most effective treatment for dealing with personal trauma is talking—to friends, loved ones, ministers or sometimes a counselor. Discussing the event repeatedly is a common, normal and helpful activity for many people who have undergone personal crises.
- If talking isn't possible, try writing out your thoughts and feelings. You might want to write to someone who is special, or to pretend you are writing to that person. You might want to write out your feelings to yourself. What is written needn't be sent or shared with anyone else; just putting words to feelings is often helpful in clarifying emotions.

Self-Care Strategies

Below are examples of self care:

- Stay away from mood-altering substances.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Practice stress reduction techniques:
- Progressive relaxation massage
- Give yourself permission to feel bad.
- Let yourself cry.
- Give yourself permission to feel good.
- Make small decisions daily to get control of your life back.
- Put structure your time.
- Lower expectations of what you "should be doing."
- Have breaks from periods of isolation.
- Give yourself permission to do something that could feel good to you.
- Exercise—even a little bit—is beneficial physically and psychologically.
- Remind yourself that your reactions are normal.
- Engage in practices that are meaningful to you,
• such as: prayer, services, walk in woods, sitting quietly, reading inspirational material or journal writing
- Talk it out—even with a professional.

Please contact the EAP program if you feel the need to talk to someone. 410-328-5860