

Coping with a Traumatic Event

People who are affected, either directly or indirectly, by a traumatic incident often experience emotional and behavioral responses. Common **emotional responses** include:

- Shock or numbness
- Depression
- Frustration
- Fear and anxiety attacks
- Anger toward others involved in the event
- Guilt
- Sadness
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable

These emotional responses may cause **physical symptoms**, such as:

- Gastrointestinal upset
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Headaches
- Weakness or fatigue
- Changes in appetite
- Dizziness
- Muscle tension

Together, emotional and physical responses can create **changes in behavior**, like:

- Angry outbursts
- Crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Moodiness
- Fear of being alone
- Difficulty remembering details of an event
- Increased use of alcohol or medication
- Agitation or irritability
- Withdrawal from others
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Decrease energy or ambition

These reactions are entirely normal. Often, you can help yourself get through this difficult time if you:

- **Take care of yourself physically:** Exercising regularly, eating right, and getting some extra rest will help your body and mind manage the stress of the situation.
- **Share with others:** Talking with trusted friends, family, and co-workers about how you are feeling will lessen the sense of loneliness and fear that is often triggered by a traumatic event. Reach out for social support.
- **Be good to yourself:** If you can, cut back a bit on the demands of work and family. Give yourself more “time outs” and, if possible, put off major tasks and decisions until you feel better.

Sometimes these self-help methods are not enough. If your reactions to a traumatic event are causing major disruptions in your life, or if you don't experience gradual improvement after two or three weeks, you may want to seek professional assistance. To speak with a counselor, call 513-891-1691 / 800-642-9794 or logon to www.trihealth.concernservices.com.