



Ways to Care for Yourself after a Traumatic Event

Research has shown that the way in which a person takes care of him or herself during the first few days following a traumatic event will help to minimize the development of future psychological reactions to the event. Understanding the reactions of your body and your emotions can help you deal with the trauma of the event.

Be Gentle With Yourself

Your body and brain work together in reaction to things that happen to you. As a result, you experience both emotional feelings and physical reactions to events. Sometimes these reactions are pleasurable, such as when you receive praise from someone. Other situations cause reactions of stress and discomfort. Physical reactions can range from muscle tension, headache, elevated blood pressure, stomach distress, nausea, pain and almost any kind of physical symptom. Emotional reactions to a trauma can include anxiety, panic, depression, anger, panic, depression, anger, sleep disturbance and irritability, to name just a few. (See our Stress Symptom checklist).

Try to Eat Well and Exercise Within Your Capabilities

People respond differently to traumatic events. It is hard to predict who will react strongly and who will show little reaction to a particular event. If you have strong reactions, it does not mean that you are mentally weak or mentally ill. Reactions to traumatic events are considered "normal reactions to abnormal events." If you find that after several weeks you are still unable to cope with your feelings, you may want to consider getting extra help through a mental health professional. This does not mean you are mentally ill, but simply means that your reaction needs more attention.

Additional ways to care for yourself after a Traumatic event:

- ◆ **Avoid Alcohol use.** Although you may feel like going home and relaxing with a glass of wine, it is very important that you avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours. The reason is that alcohol works on the way which you preserve memories of recent events. Because alcohol tends to "numb" your feelings, its influence causes your memories to be preserved in unpredictable ways. It is very important that your brain have the opportunity to deal with all aspects of a traumatic event so that you will less likely to be bothered by it later in ways that you may not understand.
- ◆ **Avoid caffeine.** Caffeine is a stimulant. You need to relax and be calm. The stimulation of both caffeine and a traumatic event may make it harder to cope and settle down.