

Coping After Exposure to a Traumatic Event

Although individuals react in their own ways to traumatic experiences, there are some common behavioral and emotional reactions that traumatic events bring forth. These normal reactions to an abnormal situation, like a traumatic event, typically subside within a short time.

1. Appetite Changes
2. Sleep Disturbances
3. Immune System Deregulation with a surge in colds, allergies,
4. Decreased exercise, increase in smoking,
5. Headaches
6. Muscle Tensions
7. Exacerbation in current medical conditions
8. Fatigue
9. Cold Sweats
10. Shortness of Breath

Emotional reactions can include:

1. Irritability
2. Sadness
3. Surges of Anxiety
4. Numbness
5. Helplessness
6. Fearful of others and the future
7. Detachment from others
8. Self-Blame
9. Survivor Guilt
10. Increase in feelings of distrust

Frequently experienced cognitive changes:

1. Avoidance or suppression of disturbing thoughts
2. Poor Concentration and decreased attention
3. Forgetfulness
4. Flashbacks of event
5. Experiencing disturbing dreams

When coping with a traumatic event, some individuals engage in self-destructive behaviors. These may include increase in alcohol use, impulsive or rash decision making, gambling, illegal drug use or abuse of over the counter meds. These strategies provide short relief to one's emotional distress through the use of avoidance. Avoiding dealing with the emotional aspects of the traumatic event only delays recovery.

Life Affirming Coping Strategies

Getting back into a healthy life routine will facilitate a quicker recovery.

1. Maintain a healthy diet
2. Maintain a regular sleep schedule
3. Engage in daily exercise (at least 30 minutes/day) at least 3 hours before bed time
4. Utilize Relaxation Techniques including breathing exercises, yoga, prayer, meditation on a positive saying or verse
5. Talk about your experience to a trusted friend, family member or counselor
6. Seek professional help if symptoms persist or worsen