

HEALING AFTER TRAUMA

*Be gentle with yourself. This crisis has created stress in your life.
It will take time and energy to feel whole and find peace of mind.
Allow yourself your feelings.*

You may feel temporarily stunned... this and any number of the following symptoms can last for minutes, hours, or even days. Be aware that your thoughts may cause physical distress and physical symptoms can be the result of unresolved grief. Denial of trauma can 'freeze' progress through the recovery process. Refusing to address the painful feelings surrounding a trauma only suppresses them and they can be reawakened in the future by events reminiscent of the trauma (flashbacks). Allow yourself to grieve. If you need to cry, cry. If you need time alone, allow yourself that time.

Soon, with time, your ability to face your emotions will increase, making decisions will become easier and you will begin to heal. There's not a lot anyone can do to prevent you from experiencing these uncomfortable feelings, there are things you can do to feel more whole and simple ways people who love you can help. If symptoms become prolonged or seriously affect your ability to operate in daily life talk to your family doctor or Pastor.

Physical Effects

- Fatigue
- Increased startle response
- Insomnia (or hypersomnia)
- Under activity or hyperactivity
- Nightmares
- Health problems (appetite changes, headaches and digestive problems)
- Shock

Cognitive Reactions

- Difficulty concentrating
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty making decisions
- Isolation
- Memory disturbance
- Inability to attach importance to anything other than this incident
- Difficulty solving problems

Taking Care of Yourself- Things to Try

- ✓ Establish Safety
- ✓ Periods of appropriate physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions. Taking a walk or bike ride can ease agitation, anger, and depression. This may also be a time when you can focus on your loss. Structure your time- keep busy.
- ✓ You are normal and having normal reactions- don't label yourself crazy or ineffective.
- ✓ Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others you trust, talk is the most healing medicine.
- ✓ Avoid risky behavior. Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol- you don't want to complicate this with unwanted consequences or a substance abuse problem.
- ✓ Take necessary medications. A grief makes you more vulnerable to illness.
- ✓ If you need support from family or friends, tell someone. Reach out and spend with others- others care.
- ✓ Do things that feel good to you (and are safe & healthy)
- ✓ Pray, meditate, or keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless nights.