

Understanding Normal Stress Responses

You have had a terrible experience. You may or may not experience some or none of the body's natural physical and or emotional responses. THIS IS A NORMAL RESPONSE TO A TRAGIC AND ABNORMAL EXPERIENCE. It's OK to feel this way. For those of you that are not affected in a physical or emotional way that's OK too. Let's be mindful to what our brothers and sisters may be experiencing. You never know what someone is facing outside of our four walls. This can have a major impact as to how we all deal with each situation we face.

“WHAT ARE COMMON STRESS RESPONSES?”

- Physical changes may include **fatigue, headache, heartburn, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, and a loss of appetite.**
- Emotional and mental response include **confusion, anxiety, fear, numbness, despair, depression, guilt, anger, grief, withdrawal and helplessness.**
- Normal responses may also include **poor concentration and intrusive thoughts.**

“WHEN WILL I FEEL THESE THINGS?”

- There is a chance that you are experiencing some of these responses now, even though the event is over.
- Sometimes these responses appear immediately, but with others days, week, even months may pass before the stress reactions appear

“HOW LONG WILL THESE REACTIONS LAST?”

- The time it takes for emotional wounds to heal varies from person to person. Some events are just too powerful to manage quickly. Much like the flu, grief and anxiety reactions must run their course. No one can deny that this is a difficult experience, but it is important to know that **things will improve.**

“WHAT IF I FEEL WORSE?”

- Sometimes the intensity of your response will increase, or the reaction may be prolonged. Professional assistance from a counselor can help. **This doesn't imply weakness or craziness.** This simply means that the particular event was so powerful that it pushed you beyond your normal coping capabilities.

“What can I do to feel better”

- Time heals all wounds. Talking things out with peers or loved ones will help a lot. **It's crucial that you “talk out” your experience.** Withdrawal and sealing over can make recovery more difficult. **Avoid alcohol/drug consumption because they can prolong the pain of the event.**
- Take good care of yourself by eating healthy foods, and exercising, get plenty of rest and **stay in touch with people who care.**

HELPFUL HINTS FOR RECOVERY

- **Try getting a little more rest than usual.** Like any other injury you need rest to heal up.
- **Contact friends.** Make a phone call. Talking to friends or family will help you feel better even if it is unrelated to the event.
- **Surround yourself with friends or loved ones.** Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or periods for a day or so.
- **Reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal. They will decrease over time and become less painful. Pleasant music or encouraging reading material may help.**
- **Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.** Stay busy. The more you can occupy your mind the better.
- **Eat well-balanced and regular meals** (even if you don't feel like it") Again its normal for your body to shut down normal function to non-major organs when it feels threatened. This will help.
- **Try to keep a reasonable level of activity.** Grab a friend and go for a walk or bike ride. Take this opportunity to go out and do something you seem to never have time for. **Make time for yourself.**
- **Fight against boredom.** Again keep yourself occupied.
- **Physical activity is often helpful.**
- **Get back to business as usual as soon as possible.** Re-establish your normal routine as soon as you can.
- **Talk to people who love you. Whether it is a family member, a friend, or one of your brothers or sisters at work.** You are loved and admired by perfect strangers everyday. Make a call or stop by a friends house.
- **If things become prolonged or too intense give us a call so we can point you in the right direction.**

If symptoms described above become severe, or if they last longer than three weeks, let us know. We will get you into a safe and confidential counselor that we have screened and deemed a good fit for us..

For Family Members and Friends

Give this sheet to your family members or friends.

If you don't want to talk about things and just need decompress for a minute that is OK too.

It is as simple as leaving this sheet laying on the kitchen table or counter.

We don't want to bring the unfortunate situations we deal with on a day to day basis home to our families but they need to know that we may be having a **NORMAL RESPONSE TO ABNORMAL SITUATIONS**. By sharing this information it will go a long way with them. Our families don't want to see us upset or in pain and they will go to great lengths to help make us feel better. We just need to let them in sometimes. By you sharing this information with them let them know that you care about them and your relationship with them. I have found that by them knowing that we had a bad day or run can explain some of our symptoms and irritability.

“As a family Member what can I do to help?”

- Please be patient with us.
- Listen carefully to us.
- Spend time with us. We need to talk and stay active.
- Offer assistance and a listening ear even if we have not asked for it.
- Reassure us that we are safe.
- Help us with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for family members and minding the children.
- Please don't take our anger or feelings personally.
- Please don't tell us “we are lucky it wasn't worse”. Traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry that such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

Here is a list of some of the normal reactions or symptoms we may be having.

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>	<u>Spiritual</u>
Fatigue Nausea	Blaming Confusion	Anxiety Guilt	Change in activity Change in speech	Anger at God Feeling distant

Muscle Tremors Chest Pain Difficulty Breathing Elevated B/P Thirst headache Visual problems Vomiting Grinding teeth Weakness Dizziness Profuse sweating chills	Poor attention Poor decisions Raised or lowered alertness Memory loss Hypervigilance Awareness of surroundings Poor problem solving ability Poor abstract thinking Loss of orientation Nightmares flashbacks	Grief Denial Emotional outburst Fear Uncertainty Emotional control problems Inappropriate emotions Apprehension Feeling overwhelmed Intense anger Irritability Agitation Severe panic	Withdrawal Emotional outburst Suspiciousness Change in usual communication Increased alcohol use loss/increased in appetite Acting out Nonspecific body complaints Hyper-alert to environment increase/decrease in sexual activity Pacing	from God Withdraw from place of worship Uncharacteristic religious involvement Belief God is powerless Loss of meaning and purpose Sense of isolation from God Questioning basic beliefs Anger towards clergy Believing God doesn't care
---	--	---	---	--