

AFTER A STRESSFUL EVENT

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

After experiencing a stressful event (an injury, unexpected death, trauma, or other overwhelming emotional experience) it is common to experience physical, emotional, and cognitive reactions. Common stress reactions are shown below. These reactions may occur immediately, or a few days, weeks, or months after the event has ended. Reactions to a stressful event may last a few days, weeks, months, and sometimes longer.

Often regaining a sense of safety and receiving support and understanding from others can help the reactions to become less intense and frequent over time. Depending on the experience, individual therapy may help people to process and heal from the stressful event.

Physical

- Nausea
- Upset Stomach
- Lack of Appetite
- Shaking (hands, lips)
- Feeling Uncoordinated
- Sweating
- Chills
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Rapid Breathing
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Headache
- Muscle Aches
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Diarrhea
- Chest Pains (see a doctor)

Emotional

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Grief
- Depressed
- Sadness
- Anger
- Irritability
- Feeling Numb
- Startled
- Shocked
- Overwhelmed
- Hopeless
- Feeling Lost or Abandoned
- Feeling Isolated
- Worrying About Others

Cognitive

- Difficulty Problem Solving
- Difficulty Making Decisions
- Slowed Thinking
- Confusion
- Disoriented
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Memory Problems
- Distressing Dreams
- Ruminating About the Event
- Poor Attention Span
- Negative Thoughts About Self
- Negative Thoughts About Others
- Negative Thoughts About World



STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESSFUL EVENTS

After a stressful event we need to help our brains and bodies to feel safe and connected to people who care about us. Below are some ideas you can do when feeling overwhelmed by emotions, some wellness ideas, and some ways family members and friends can support you.

Wellness Ideas

- Try to get more rest
- Talk to people who support you
- Spend time with family/friends
- Maintain as normal of a schedule as possible
- Take breaks when needed
- Eat well-balanced meals, even when you don't feel hungry
- Try to do some physical activity
- Intrusive thoughts/images are common.
Acknowledge them and engage in an activity that occupies your mind (talking with a friend, carpentry, knitting)
- Label and express your feelings

Deep Breathing

Breath in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, exhale for five seconds.

Grounding

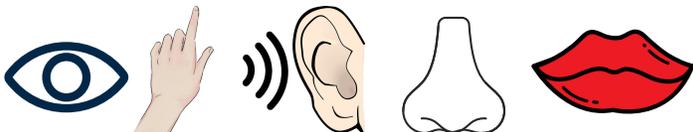
5 Things You See

4 Things You Feel

3 Things You Hear

2 Things You Smell

1 Thing You Taste

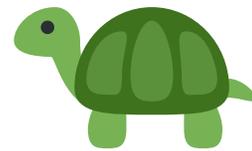


For Family Members and Friends

- Listen carefully and put away distractions
- Spend time with the person
- See if there is a task they need done
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Give them space if needed and check on them occasionally
- Don't take any feelings personally
- Respond empathetically to them
- Don't be upset if they do not want to talk with you about the incident
- Sit with them in silence
- Practice breathing or meditation with them
- Engage in physical activity with them

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Turtle: Bring your shoulders up to your ears, hold for five seconds, release.



Robot and Ragdoll: Tense your whole body like a robot for five seconds, release and relax like a ragdoll.

