

Symptoms of Trauma

Experiencing a traumatic event can sometimes lead people to experience symptoms that are out of the range of their everyday lives. It is common, **and actually quite normal**, to experience emotional and physical aftershocks as a result of having been involved with/or a witness to a traumatic incident. Common reactions to trauma can vary in severity, intensity and/or frequency and could last days, weeks, months, or even longer. Experiencing emotional and physical stress is **NOT** a sign of weakness, nor does it indicate you are unable to cope; it is the way your mind and body process an unfamiliar and stressful experience.

Physical

- ◆ Numbness, fatigue and/or weakness
- ◆ Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- ◆ Dry mouth
- ◆ Nausea, upset stomach and/or vomiting
- ◆ Sweating or chills, clammy skin, tremors, dizziness
- ◆ Hyperventilation or other difficulty breathing
- ◆ Chest pains
- ◆ Muscle tension and headaches
- ◆ Teeth grinding
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Fainting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Visual difficulty
- ◆ Sleeping problems

Cognitive Symptoms

- ◆ Decreased attention span, memory, poor concentration and confusion
- ◆ Impaired thinking, decision making and/or problem-solving
- ◆ Problems with memory and concentration
- ◆ Hyper-alertness
- ◆ Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people
- ◆ Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
- ◆ Flashbacks (repeated disturbing images)
- ◆ Nightmares or distressing dreams
- ◆ Self blame or blaming others
- ◆ Hyper-vigilance
- ◆ Suspiciousness
- ◆ Intrusive thoughts and images
- ◆ Isolation
- ◆ Time distortion or perception alteration

Emotional Symptoms

- ◆ Anxiety, panic, terror, fear
- ◆ Anger, rage, resentment, scape-goating or blaming
- ◆ Stress
- ◆ Guilt (for what we did or did not do, for surviving)
- ◆ Detachment, numbness, denial
- ◆ Irritability, agitation and/or restlessness
- ◆ Nervousness
- ◆ Feeling abandoned, hurt
- ◆ Loss of interest in usual activities
- ◆ Fear and worry (about the impact of the event, about it happening again, about other loved ones)
- ◆ Grief, sadness and depression
- ◆ Helplessness, feeling lost
- ◆ Shock, feeling overwhelmed
- ◆ Loss of emotional control, outbursts
- ◆ Initial inappropriate emotional response at the time of the event (e.g. laughing)
- ◆ Hopelessness
- ◆ Wishing to hide
- ◆ Thoughts of suicide
- ◆ Feelings of uncertainty
- ◆ Numbness
- ◆ “Why me?”

Behavioral Symptoms

- ◆ Withdrawal from family, friends, colleagues
- ◆ Change in ways of communicating or interacting with others
- ◆ Change in speech
- ◆ Prolonged silence
- ◆ Frequent arguing
- ◆ Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- ◆ Decreased hygiene
- ◆ Change in appetite – increase or decrease
- ◆ Increased drinking, smoking and/or drug use
- ◆ Intensified “startle” reflex
- ◆ Overly vigilant to environment
- ◆ Hyper-alertness or hyper-activity
- ◆ Excessive humor or silence
- ◆ Increased aggressiveness
- ◆ Emotional outbursts (anger, crying, etc)
- ◆ Inability to rest or relax
- ◆ Disturbed sleep patterns
- ◆ Change in sexual functioning
- ◆ Pacing