

What May Help

Although reactions to a traumatic event can be expected, the following tips may help:

- Refrain from excessive substance use
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a proper diet
- Rest regularly
- Continue contact with colleagues, friends, family—people who will listen supportively
- Be honest with yourself regarding your stress level and your ability to cope

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing the incident and processing the event can help you clarify what actually occurred.
- Legal and judicial decisions can be discussed and utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies—allowing for the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from traumatic experiences.

You can utilize the traumatic experiences as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and even protective instinct skills.

Who can help?

The Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services Unit can assist you with information regarding your case status, Victims' Rights, Crime Victim Compensation, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to the appropriate community helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.



Resources

2-1-1 Texas

2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905

www.211texas.org

Office for Victims of Crime

1-800-851-3420

www.ovc.gov

Adults and Trauma

Victim Services Unit

5555 Airport Blvd
Austin, TX 78751
512-854-9709



Name/ID Number:

Direct Number:

Mailing Address:
PO Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

Trauma occurs when an event is unusually frightening or threatening. The source of the trauma can be any unexpected event—possibly one that is violent. It's important to remember that a traumatic event can have a wide range of reactions.

Physical Responses

Common short-term physical reactions may include:

- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Lack of energy
- Weight loss or gain
- Hyperventilation
- Change in sleeping or eating patterns
- Rapid pulse

Emotional Responses

Common emotional responses may include:

- Embarrassment
- Feelings of guilt
- Intrusive thinking (mind wandering, flashbacks to the event, or sense of reliving event)
- Nightmares
- Avoidance of places/activities/people that remind you of the trauma
- Mood swings (sudden and unprovoked fear, anger, crying, irritability, giddiness)
- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness or memory lapses
- Difficulty showing emotion
- Inability to recall important aspect of trauma
- Disinterest in previously valued activities
- Exaggerated startle response

Common Reactions

The following factors impact your ability to cope successfully with a traumatic event:

- **Your perception of the type and severity of the event which disrupted your life.**

How you put the traumatic event into perspective is important. In an attempt to make sense out of what happened, it is important that you do not blame yourself. It is also important to understand that strong emotional reactions are common after a traumatic event. The feelings may be new and scary, but they will not last. However, that does not mean that there will not be ups and downs along the way to recovery. Time will heal—there *is* a light at the end of the tunnel.

- **Your willingness to talk about the event.**

It is important that you be willing to talk about the event with others. Open communication will assist in your recovery. Only you can decide who you'll talk to, when you will talk to that person, and how much detail you'll provide.

- **Your ability to handle everyday stressors.**

The amount of everyday stress you deal with can effect your recovery from a trauma. A healthy amount of stress in our lives helps us to learn and create coping skills. The degree to which any stressful situation impacts your daily functioning depends upon: 1) the nature of the stressor and 2) personal and external resources—i.e. having an optimistic personality or a strong support system.

Remember, involvement in a traumatic event can produce upsetting responses such as disturbed sleep, changes in appetite, and also difficulty in concentrating.

These responses will likely diminish with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to consult with a helping professional for assistance.

Tips for Recovery

- **Remain in touch with friends/loved ones.**

Sometimes there is a tendency to pull away from interactions with others. Often, friends or loved ones do not know what to say—they either say nothing or say something to which the victim reacts negatively. It may seem to you that friends have abandoned you. You can help by telling friends what you need from them—"I don't feel comfortable with physical contact right now," "I appreciate it when you just hold me without asking a lot of questions", or "I want you to call me every day and just ask me how I'm doing."

- **Return to a regular routine.**

When a traumatic event happens, the initial perception is that everything is dangerous and out of control and that he/she is never safe. Although these feelings are understandable, they may have been distorted by the intense nature of the event that took place. Returning to your normal routine will help you to deal with those "out of control" feelings. If you can maintain at least part of a normal routine, you can begin to deal with these feelings. Little by little—by going to work, shopping, driving, eating, being with family members, exercising—a more healthy and accurate perception of life begins to redevelop. You begin to realize that not all the world is dangerous. With these little successes, you slowly regain self-confidence and start to regain stability.

- **Find some "normal things" to do.**

You may not want to participate in relatively complicated human experiences like going out for drinks, dating, or having sex. However, participating in more simple activities like shopping, going to a mall, going out to eat with friends, going to church, or a movie may help reinforce a more realistic perception of the world. You may need a friend to act as a social coordinator for a few weeks to suggest or initiate some safe casual activities.