

on you will allow you to more easily come to grips with the situation.

Avoid impulsive decisions, (such as resigning from your job) until you have worked through the situation. Self-medication with drugs and alcohol serves only to feed the denial and cause additional problems. Although you may wish to be alone, now is the time to turn to someone else for support.

Finally, recognize that while the *feelings you are experiencing may not be comfortable, they are typical for one who has been through a major trauma – a normal reaction to an abnormal event.*

Helpful tips:

- **Express feelings and concerns** with caring friends and loved ones. Share this hand-out with them.
- **Maintain a normal schedule** as much as you can.
- **Eat well-balanced meals** and try to avoid too much caffeine and sugar (even just juice and crackers can help).
- **Try to exercise** (even with just a brisk 20-30 minute walk).
- **Seek professional assistance** if emotional and social problems persist and begin to interfere with your normal activities.
- **Take deep breaths** when stress or tension strike (breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out through your nose for four seconds...repeat as necessary, but go slowly at first).

HOW TO GET HELP

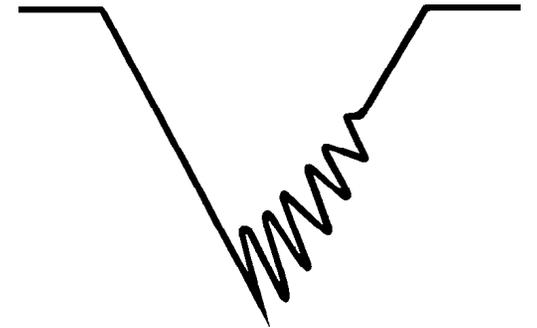
Call the
Employee Assistance Program
Bob Schweitzer
841 North Broadway, 3rd Floor
Milwaukee WI 53202
286-3145



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Developed with information from *Stress Reactions to Traumatic Events*, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, Behavioral Sciences Services Unit. Cover graphic is derived from "Emergency Response To Crisis" and printed with permission from Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D.

POST-TRAUMA



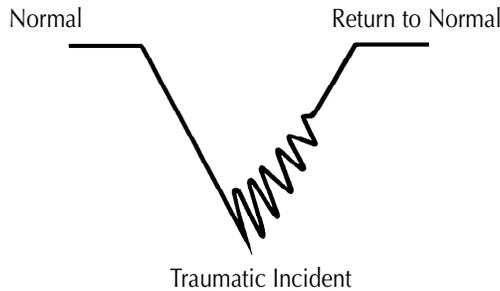
COPING
WITH
TRAUMATIC
EVENTS

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You have been involved in a traumatic event. Perhaps this event causes an uncomfortable response. Some people report almost no reaction to a traumatic event, while others report a variety of physical, emotional, and social responses. You find yourself faced with feelings unlike those you have previously experienced. This informational hand-out is provided to help you and your family better understand and cope with your reaction following involvement in a traumatic situation.

A MAJOR STRESS

To better understand your reaction, compare the situation in which you have been involved to the splash caused when a rock is thrown into a still pool of water. Your reactions are like the ripples which may continue after the rock hits the surface. As a result, you may have specific physical and emotional reactions, possible family and/or work difficulties. Becoming aware that your responses are not unusual may help lessen the anxiety these reactions might cause you and your family. *Also be aware that you are now in a process of returning to your normal emotional and physical state.* The process is sometimes slow, but generally is steady, with a few ups and downs as depicted on the next page.



PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Physical symptoms you may experience are:

1. Restlessness
2. Tension
3. Headaches
4. Tremors
5. Nausea
6. Change in appetite/eating problems
7. Sexual problems
8. Fatigue
9. Nightmares/flashbacks
10. Sleep disturbances

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Major trauma is frequently followed by one or more emotional reactions. Although any of the following might occur, individuals vary in terms of the variety, intensity and frequency of such reactions.

Possible emotional reactions include:

1. **Becoming withdrawn**
2. **Having trouble remembering or concentrating**
3. **Having intrusive thoughts**, which are repeated memories of the situation that are unexpected and involuntary
4. **Feeling generally anxious**, such as feeling frightened without knowing for certain what is causing the fear
5. **Feeling survival guilt**, which is feeling guilty for surviving when others have not, or feeling guilty over actions needed to survive
6. **Experiencing increased reactions** when situations or activities remind you of the original event
7. **Becoming hyper-vigilant**, the state of being constantly “on guard” or “on alert”, always anticipating negative events
8. **Being moody, irritable, or having angry outbursts** for little or no reason
9. **Becoming emotionally numb** to avoid the pain of the trauma

HELPING YOURSELF

Often individuals try to protect themselves from troublesome reactions through denial. That is, refusing to acknowledge personal reactions related to the event. Recognizing that the event might have had an impact