

Tips for family and friends

Having your friend or loved one involved in a traumatic event affects you too. But you can provide valuable support by being available and providing opportunities to talk. Listen without judging what they say.

They may not want to talk about it at all. Don't take it personally but remind them you are there if they change their mind. Try to give them space and time to recover in their own way.

Don't be surprised if they display extreme fear, anxiety or anger sometimes. Reactions to a traumatic event can be powerful and at such times people can be unable to simply 'calm down' or 'pull themselves together'.

Understand that this is a difficult time. Remind them that it can help to speak with a professional counsellor used to dealing with situations like these.

Contact ACCESS Programs for confidential enquiries and appointments

In Australia call **1300 66 77 00**

In New Zealand call **0800 327 669**

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

FOLLOWING A TRAUMATIC EVENT

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After a traumatic event - what happens now?

Being involved in a traumatic event can cause disruption to your life for some time.

You may experience:

- Numbness or emptiness
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Regret
- Anger
- Relief

It's common to feel a range of emotions, sometimes contradictory. It doesn't mean you're going crazy.

Sooner or later you may wish to speak to a counsellor who understands what you are experiencing, will listen without judgement and offer strategies to minimise the impact of the event you've been involved in.

Seeking counselling is not a sign of weakness, and if you choose to do so it can help you manage the aftermath of a serious event in your life.

Ideas for handling the impact of a traumatic event

Traumatic events impact people in different ways. You may be missing sleep, having difficulty concentrating or getting anxious, for example. Be prepared for some disturbance and don't expect to get over it in a couple of days.

There are some simple things you can do:

- Prepare yourself to be anxious when near the scene of the event or in similar circumstances
- Be patient with yourself
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Physical exercise is helpful. Go for walks or a swim, or play your favourite sport
- Eat regularly and well, even if you don't feel like it
- Keep to your normal routines as much as possible
- Keep occupied, don't allow yourself 'empty' time to mope or dwell

- Acknowledge your emotions and share them with people you trust. Keep in touch with your friends, family and colleagues
- Use deep breathing and relaxation to help you get to sleep, or back to sleep if you wake in the night

Avoid things that won't help

- Overuse of alcohol, coffee and other stimulants, or food
- Working to excess or keeping yourself so busy you have no time to relax and do the things you enjoy
- Withdrawing from others
- Bottling things up, instead of talking about what you are experiencing
- Dwelling on negative thoughts
- Making important life decisions straight away