

#traumaticevents
#publichealth5-19service



TRAUMATIC EVENTS FACTSHEET



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This factsheet will provide you with information and advice about what to do if you have been affected either directly or indirectly by a traumatic event and links to helpful websites.

Dealing with traumatic events

Very occasionally, traumatic events may happen to people you know or in your community. This could include crime, accidents or natural disasters. In Cumbria, many people have felt affected by the shootings in June 2010, or by the floods that caused lots of damage and disruption. Even if you or your family are not directly affected, traumatic events can still leave you feeling scared, confused and upset.

“When I hear about things happening in my town, it makes me worried. There have been some rapes reported lately, and now I hate going out at night and stay away from some places that make me feel panicky. I carry a panic alarm too just in case.”

How might I react?

Everyone reacts differently and you may feel many different emotions. It is important to remember that traumatic events are extremely rare.

You might:

- feel like crying a lot
- feel numb or confused
- feel worried or less safe than you did before
- feel relieved that you and your family were not hurt
- have bad memories or dreams
- have difficulties eating, sleeping or going to school
- get angry more easily
- feel dizzy or shaky, or have a funny feeling in your tummy when you think about what happened

These are all normal reactions that people experience when they are feeling stressed. Stress can change how you act with your friends and family and might affect your school work.

“The shootings made me angry and scared – I was worried it would happen to one of my friends. I didn’t go out of my house for a week afterwards, but then things just went back to normal.”

You might have some of these feelings while you try to make sense of what happened. These feelings may come and go and you may feel upset when you least expect it.

You may have strong feelings right away after a traumatic event or you may not notice a change until later, perhaps after a few weeks or even months.

How can I feel better?

It may take time for you to feel better and for your life to return to normal. In the meantime, here are some things that can help.

- Carry on with your normal routine and activities if you can
- Go to school, spend time with friends and enjoy your hobbies. It is ok to feel happy and enjoy yourself
- Be careful not to miss meals or to eat too much
- Exercise and stay active
- Take time to sleep, rest and have some quiet time.
- Drawing pictures or writing about your feelings can sometimes be helpful
- Talk to your family and people at school about your feelings, if you want to
- Let your family and friends help you

“I get panicky and it feels like I’m having a mini heart attack. I just try and take deep breaths and drink some water, then I just sit down and chill out for a bit until I feel better.”

What if I’m still not feeling ok?

Most people will feel better without special help but sometimes your feelings might be difficult to cope with alone.

If a few weeks after the event you are still experiencing any of the following, ask for help from your family or school.

Are you:

- still feeling very sad, or very jumpy
- having a lot of nightmares or trouble sleeping
- still thinking about the event all the time
- having trouble concentrating at school

Talk to your family and teachers about how you feel and they will make sure you get help to feel better.

It's normal to experience many different emotions and life is full of ups and downs, just like a rollercoaster. Sometimes, it can feel like all these emotions are getting on top of us, and stopping us getting on with our everyday lives. This can be scary, but you're not alone.

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.kooth.com

Free online counselling and support

www.childline.org.uk

Information & advice from Childline

www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/coping-with-traumatic-events/

Webpage from Mind.org.uk which has useful advice and information

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/traumatic-stress-in-children-for-parents-and-carers

Webpage from the Royal College of Psychiatrists describes the causes and symptoms of traumatic stress, and provides practical advice on how to get help

