

Trauma and crisis counselling



The effects of traumatic events

Different people have different reactions to trauma and traumatic events.

Individuals and families may have a range of feelings and a number of needs in times of trauma and when adjusting to life afterwards.

The events people have experienced may have different meaning for different people.

For some people, experiencing a recent trauma may trigger memories of past traumatic experiences or life events.

In short, there is no right or wrong way to feel. What people may be experiencing is valid for them even though it may be different from what others expect. It is recognised as most useful to identify and work through these reactions/feelings as early as possible to assist people to start re-connecting with their life in ways that are meaningful.

Family members, friends and support people may also have their own reactions to someone who has experienced trauma. They may also require some assistance or information about their reactions or how they can best provide support.

Some common reactions

There are, however, some common reactions that many people suffering from trauma report. Survivors of trauma report that these reactions may change over time.

Some of the reactions people may experience can include:

Psychological reactions: These could be shock or disbelief, images or flashbacks to events, intrusive thoughts which may make it difficult to concentrate or regain/maintain a daily routine, feelings of helplessness or powerlessness, isolation or loss of control.

Emotional responses: There are a whole range of emotional responses, for example, some people report feeling 'numb' or not being able to connect with their emotions after trauma. Others report mood swings, anger, guilt, fear, depression, grief and loss.

Physiological responses: These are responses that you may notice in your physical body such as sleeplessness, fluctuations to your appetite, anxiety attacks, shortness of breath or feelings of panic.

Loss of meaning: You may feel that your perceptions of the world have been changed. Your spirituality or world view may now seem different than it was before the trauma.

Who can help?

Family/friends

- Many people turn to family and friends for comfort in these times. That is perfectly natural if you have people around you that you feel comfortable supporting you.
- People may have supportive family but wish to keep their trauma reactions separate from their emotional support people. Others may not feel that they can talk to family and friends or that they need to limit what they say to them.
- Some people may feel that others can't understand how they feel or may not believe that they have supportive people around them.

Counselling

Counselling can also assist people to not only understand what is happening but look at ways to help people cope and start reconnecting with life. Sometimes it is useful to speak confidentially with another person who is independent of family, friends and work colleagues.

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A helpful way for some people to explore their reactions and how trauma may be affecting them is through crisis or trauma counselling. People who have been exposed to trauma may take some time to cope with what has happened, so working through some of the initial crisis reactions can give people a platform on which to go on recovering from what they have experienced.

Some people find it helpful to speak with a counsellor as soon as possible following a traumatic experience. Others may decide to contact a counsellor much later when they believe they may need additional assistance to further develop their coping strategies.

Family, friends or support people may also speak with a counsellor to explore how they can best provide support.

How can Relationships Australia (SA) Help?

Relationships Australia (SA), is an independent, non-profit organisation which is committed to providing services that reflect the changing needs of individuals, families and communities.

Relationships Australia (SA) has professionally qualified and experienced crisis and trauma counsellors who are able to provide telephone or face to face counselling to families and individuals who may have been affected by trauma.

Other Services

People may prefer to speak with their:

- General Practitioner
- Local Community Health Service
- Minister of Religion

Relationships Australia (SA) can also talk with you about other services that may be helpful.



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