



Post-Trauma



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Coping With Traumatic Events



Tel: 414-286-3145

CITY OF MILWAUKEE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a service offered to employees and family members to help address and cope with stressors and/or personal problems. The EAP Coordinator assists with clarifying problems, exploring solutions, and selecting the best course of action. All services are confidential and time with the EAP Coordinator is of no cost to the employee. When necessary, individuals may be referred to an appropriate resource for additional assistance. Follow-up is provided to ensure needs are met.

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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 experience 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
- Maintain a normal schedule as much as possible
- Eat well-balanced meals and try to avoid too much caffeine and sugar
- Try to exercise (even with just a brisk 20-30 minute walk)
- Seek professional assistance if emotional and social problems persist and interfere with normal activities
- Take deep and slow breaths when stress or tension strike

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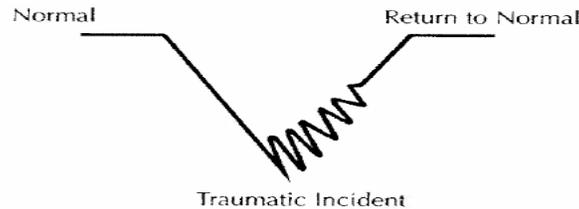
Coping With a Traumatic Event

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 may 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 the process of returning to your normal state. The process is sometimes slow, but generally steady,

with a few ups and downs as depicted below.



Physical Reactions

Physical symptoms you may experience are:

- Restlessness
- Tenseness
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Change in appetite/eating problems
- Nightmares/flashbacks
- 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:

- Becoming withdrawn
- Having trouble remembering or

concentrating

- Feeling generally anxious, such as feeling frightened without knowing for certain what is causing the fear
- Having intrusive thoughts, which are repeated memories of the situation that are unexpected and involuntary
- Feeling survival guilt, which is feeling guilty for surviving when other have not, or feeling guilty over actions needed to survive
- Experiencing increased reactions when situations or activities remind you of the original event
- Becoming hyper-vigilant, the state of constantly being “on guard” or “on alert”—always anticipating the negative
- Being moody, irritable or having angry outbursts for little or no reason
- 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 on you will allow