

What can help

Reactions are likely to decrease over the first few weeks for most people.

- Talk to someone you trust. It will help to make you feel less isolated and more understood. It may lead to help being offered
- Set realistic goals. Allowing time to come to terms with what has happened is Important
- In addition to deliberately thinking about the event, the natural tendency to dream about it may help to deal with it
- Confronting reality. Going over what has happened, talking about the event, possibly returning to the scene if this is possible. Attending funerals may help you to come to terms with it
- The emotional and physical support of those around you and the sharing with others who have experienced the same or similar event can be beneficial
- Try not to increase your use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Maintain a balanced diet and cut down on caffeine
- Do something to help you relax and unwind. Listen to music, go for long walks, whatever works best for you

When to seek Professional help

Experience shows that reactions to traumatic events usually fade as time passes. However, if your symptoms persist for longer than 6-8 weeks help is available. It is important to remember that if you have suffered a personal loss as a result of the incident, your recovery may take considerably longer than months.

**For UK residents contact:
Your local healthcare NHS Trust or your
General Practitioner (GP)**

**For residents of the Isle of Man
contact: Your own GP**

**All Government employees - telephone
Staff Welfare Service on 687027 or
contact on Staffwelfare@gov.im**

**All calls are confidential. If not answered
immediately please leave telephone no.
and you will be contacted within 24
working hours.**

Useful web links:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/trauma/about-trauma/>

**You are basically the same person that
you were before the incident. If you feel
unable to cope with your feelings or
reactions, support and advice are
available.**



**Isle of Man
Government**

Reillys Ellan Vannin

Response to Trauma

*"What you are feeling is normal.
What you have experienced is not."*

Here are some things that may help,
based on the experiences of others.



Major Incident Support Team
(A Joint Island Initiative)

Response to Trauma

Some Do's

- Do take time out for yourself. You may sometimes want to be alone, or be with close family and friends
- Do try to keep life as normal as possible
- Do express your needs clearly and honestly to family, friends and officials
- Do be careful at home or when driving, accidents are more common after severe stress

And Don'ts

- Don't bottle up your emotions. Express your feelings
- Don't avoid talking about what happened. Take opportunities to discuss the experience
- Don't expect memories to go away. The thoughts and feelings may stay with you for a long time
- Don't shut out those you love including your children. Let them talk to you. Share experiences with children through games, drawing and stories
- Don't neglect sleep, rest and exercise. Keeping fit aids recovery
- Don't isolate yourself. Try to remain part of a group

- Don't take on too much, being active can take your mind off what has happened. You need time to come to terms with it
- Don't make major life changes. Your judgement may not be at its best. Take advice from the people you trust

You may find that coming to terms with what has happened is a slow process. It may seem like a dream. Crying can be helpful and therapeutic.

People may mistakenly think that you are being "strong" or that you "don't care". Numbness can initially be the body's way of protecting you, allowing the distress of the incident to be processed slowly and gradually.

Some Common Reactions

The impact of an event can leave people feeling confused, distressed, disbelieving and fearful. Although some reactions may be alarming they are entirely **normal** responses to severe stress and shock.

It is not unusual to experience one or more of the following in the first few weeks following trauma:-

- Hypervigilance - feeling agitated and constantly on the lookout for danger
- Sleep disturbance, bad dreams, tiredness
- Intrusive memories - feeling as if the trauma is happening again

- Feeling frightened, tearful, angry or anxious
- Feeling guilt, sadness, disappointment or regret
- Feeling numb or detached
- Avoiding thoughts and memories associated with the event
- Avoiding activities or situations associated with the event

Physical reactions may also include:-

- Shaking, trembling, sweating
- Having difficulties in breathing, heart pounding, dizziness
- Disturbance of menstrual cycle or loss of interest in sex
- Tension and muscle aches and pains, stomach problems such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea

Relationships

You may tend to distance yourself from those you are close with. You may feel that they cannot understand what you have been through and not want to talk. By sharing your thoughts and feelings you allow your family and friends to support and comfort you.