

Common Reactions to Traumatic Events and How to Get Through Your Day

Traumatic Events:

Acts of violence
Bullying or harassment
Racial discrimination
Physical, psychological, sexual, or emotional abuse
Traffic collisions
Life threatening illness
Pandemic
Sudden loss of a loved one
Being attacked or kidnapped
Acts of terrorism
Natural disasters

Trauma:

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event. A person may experience trauma as a response to any event they find physically or emotionally threatening or harmful. (American Psychological Association)

- Acute Trauma: A single stressful or dangerous event
- Chronic Trauma: Repeated or prolonged exposure to highly stressful events
- Complex Trauma: Exposure to multiple traumatic events
- Vicarious Trauma: Experiencing trauma symptoms from being repeatedly exposed to other people's trauma and their stories of traumatic events

Reactions to Trauma:

Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event can cause a range of responses. Reactions will vary from person to person, even if they experience or witness similar events. There are no right or wrong ways to react. Trauma symptoms happen because a person's sense of safety has been threatened. Safety is a very individualized feeling. Trauma knows no boundaries in terms of race, gender, age or socioeconomic status.

Physical Reactions:

Headaches	Sweating
Other physical aches/pains	Feeling dizzy
Digestive issues	Sleep difficulties
Fatigue	Changes in appetite
Racing heart	

Emotional & Psychological Reactions:

Denial	Hypervigilance
Anger or irritability	Hopelessness
Numbness	Guilt or shame
Sadness or grief	Flashbacks
Shock or disbelief	Fear
Depression	Anxiety

Impact on Daily Living:

Difficulty with concentration or memory

Increased incidence of error
Lack of motivation
Lack of organization skills
Absenteeism

Strategies for Coping:

1. Give yourself time to adjust: Be patient with yourself and take time to notice your thoughts and feelings.
2. Talk it out: Share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust. Saying it out loud can be freeing. Reach out to someone you believe may be struggling.
3. Don't go it alone: Find a place of community for time together.
4. Pause and reflect: Traumatic reactions can lead us to be quick to react. Focus on trying to pause, reflect and choose your response.
5. Set limits: Say "no" if you do not have the energy for a conversation and respect the decisions of others not to engage as well.
6. Take a break: Stay informed, but limit your time watching news or scrolling social media.
7. Meet your basic needs: Get plenty of sleep, adequate nutrition, and some exercise.
8. Engage in things you love: Have fun. We don't have to focus on the struggle all of the time.
9. Find a constructive outlet: Seek ways to advocate for yourself and others or find a meaningful place to volunteer.
10. Stay organized: Use reminders, a planner, or other organizational tools to help you with your daily tasks.
11. Routine: Trying to maintain your normal routine as much as possible can bring a sense of familiarity.
12. Attend to your spiritual self: Pray, meditate, attend services, or engage in other activities that help you find purpose and meaning in your life.

Seeking Support:

Many individuals will experience some form of trauma during their lifetime, but those who experience multiple traumas or chronic trauma may be significantly impacted. Our emotional well-being is connected to all our experiences. Seeking help takes courage and strength. Taking care of yourself is essential. Ignoring a trauma response can lead to an inability to engage in your day to day activities, interact with your loved ones, or support those you care about. Support is available for all members of the CMU community. Take care of yourself, take care of each other.

CMU Resources:

Counseling Center: Free counseling services for any student enrolled in classes and living in Michigan
(989)774-3381 www.counsel.cmich.edu

CMU Cares: File a Care Report when concerned about the safety and well-being of a CMU student
www.cmich.edu/cmucares

SAPA Survivors of sexual aggression (989)774-2255

24/7 Resources:

Listening Ear Crisis Center	(989)772-2918
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	800-273-8255
Crisis Text Line	text HOME to 741741
Trevor Lifeline	866-488-7386- chat 6678678
Trans Lifeline	877-565-8860
Veterans Crisis Line	800-273-8255 (press 1)