

Coping with a Traumatic Incident

*Are my reactions normal?
Do I need an appointment with a Psychologist?*

In the course of a lifetime most of us will experience several personally traumatic incidents. The death of a friend or family member, the break up of an important relationship, serious conflict within our family, failing an important exam, unwanted pregnancy, a serious health problem, being victimized by a violent act, etc. Reactions to these intense events can be disorienting, confusing, and highly variable. Although painful, these feelings are part of the natural healing process. There's very little you can do to make yourself not experience these uncomfortable feelings, but there are things you can do to promote a healthy recovery. If you have experienced an intense or traumatic event recently, you may experience some of these reactions:

Physical Reactions

Fatigue, insomnia, hypersomnia, underactivity, headaches, nightmares, hyperactivity, startle reactions, exhaustion, digestive problems, changes in appetite.

Cognitive Reactions

Difficulty with concentration, solving problems, or making decisions; memory disturbance; flashbacks. Inability to attach importance to anything other than the incident;

Emotional Reactions

Fear, guilt, emotional numbing, over sensitivity, anger, irritability, anxiety, depression, violent fantasies, feelings of helplessness, amnesia for the event; feelings of isolation.