

## **About Experiencing or Witnessing a Traumatic Event**

When you experience or witness an event that is traumatic for you, you may feel intense fear, helplessness, terror, or horror or you may find yourself just feeling numb (not feeling anything). Sometimes, you may not realize that you have been traumatized. You may be in shock or unaware of the impact of the event.

During the days or months following a trauma, you may find yourself re-experiencing the event – in dreams, feelings, daydreams and/or conscious thoughts – or trying to avoid anything that may remind you of the trauma. You may feel detached from those around you. You may have difficulty sleeping or find yourself sleeping much more than usual. You may have trouble concentrating – keeping your mind on what you are doing. You may feel unusually fatigued, anxious, sad or depressed. Each individual's response is deeply personal – therefore all responses to trauma are “normal”, although coping strategies can be more or less effective.

### **Some Useful Strategies for Dealing with Your Reactions**

First, recognize that you have been exposed to a traumatic event and that it is bound to affect you in some way. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to think or feel about the traumatic event. Any reaction you have is valid. Be accepting of your own feelings and reactions as well as those of others. Different people may react in very different ways.

Talking to others about the event can be very helpful. Tell sympathetic family or friends about your experience. Try to resist feeling overly-responsible or blaming yourself: Try to understand what your limitations were at the time of the event. People tend to feel that they should have reacted differently or done something to prevent or to lessen the impact of the incident. Be aware that most people react in the best way that they can based on their ability and their awareness at the exact moment in time.

Sometimes the trauma has affected your friends and family, and they may not be able to help you or even listen to you. In fact, they may also need someone to talk to.

### **Counseling Can Be Helpful**

Take advantage of the individual and group counseling services available to you. Counseling can help you make sense of your experience – to understand how the trauma has affected you and to understand your feelings and reactions to it.

If you or someone close to you has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event or if you would like more information about reactions to trauma, come in and speak with a professional counselor or you can call for an appointment at (831) 459-2628.