



Understanding Personal Stress After A Serious Incident

Your experience was a very personal one but this pamphlet will help you to know how others have reacted in similar situations. It will also show how you can help normal healing to occur and to avoid some pitfalls.

Normal feelings and emotions you may experience:

Fear

- of damage to oneself and those we love
- of being left alone, of having to leave loved ones
- of "breaking down" or "losing control"
- of a similar event happening again
- Helplessness
- crises show up human weakness, as well as strength

Sadness

- for deaths, injuries and losses of every kind

Longing

- for all that has gone

Guilt

- for being better off than others, i.e. for surviving, for not being injured, for still having material things
- regrets for things not done

Memories

- of feelings of loss or of love for other people in your life who have been injured or died at other times

Disappointed

- For all the plans that can now never be fulfilled

Shame

- for having been exposed as helpless, emotional and needing others
- for not having reacted as one would have wished

Anger

- at what happened, at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen
- at the injustice and senselessness of it all
- at the shame and indignities and the lack of proper understanding by others and their inefficiencies
- why me?

Hope

- For the future and better times

Everyone may have these feelings. Experience has shown that they may vary in intensity according to circumstance. Nature heals through allowing these feelings to come out. This will not lead to loss of control, but stopping these feelings may lead to other and possibly more complicated problems.

Do remember, crying can give relief.

Physical and mental sensations

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, fuzziness of the mind including loss of memory and concentration, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty in breathing, choking in the throat and chest, nausea, diarrhoea, muscular tension which may lead to pain, e.g. headaches, neck and backaches, abdominal pain/tummy ache, menstrual disorders, change in sexual interest.

<p>Numbness Your mind may allow the what happened to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly either as “being strong” or “uncaring”.</p> <p>Activity Helping others may give you some relief.</p> <p>Reality Facing the reality, by attending funerals, inspecting losses, returning to the scene, will help you to come to terms with the event. As you allow the disaster more into your mind, there is a need to think about it, to talk about it and at night to dream about it over and over again. Children play and draw about the event.</p> <p>Support It can be a relief to receive other people’s physical and emotional support. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can help.</p> <p>Privacy In order to deal with feelings, you may find it necessary at times to be alone, or just with family and close friend.</p> <p>Family and social relationships New friendships and relationships may develop. On the other hand, strains in existing relationships may appear. The good feelings in giving and receiving may be replaced by conflict. You may feel that too little or the wrong things are offered, or that you cannot give as much as is expected.</p> <p>Accidents are more frequent after severe stress. Alcohol and drug intake may increase due to the extra pressure experienced, such an increase is not a contribution toward helping the recovery or integration process involved.</p>	<p>Some Do’s and Don’ts</p> <p>Don’t bottle up feelings. Do express your emotions and let children share in the grief.</p> <p>Don’t avoid talking about what happened</p> <p>Do take every opportunity to review the experience.</p> <p>Do allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care.</p> <p>Don’t expect the memories to go away – the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.</p> <p>Don’t forget that children experience similar feelings.</p> <p>Do take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with those important to you.</p> <p>Do express your needs clearly and honestly.</p> <p>Do try to keep your life as normal as possible after the acute grief.</p> <p>Do let children talk about their emotions and express themselves in games and drawings.</p> <p>Do send your children back to school and let them keep up with their activities.</p> <p>DO DRIVE MORE CAREFULLY</p> <p>DO BE MORE CAREFUL AROUND THE HOME</p> <p>WARNING: Accidents are more common after severe stress.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">  </p>
--	---	---