**The psychological effects of crisis**

**How to support yourself and your friends and family after a crisis**

It is normal to react strongly following a major shock or upset. The force of the feelings may spur thoughts about how things could have been different.

**Possible reactions during the first days:**

* The incident may feel unreal or nightmarish and difficult to understand.
* You might feel numb; on the other hand, you may have powerful emotional outbursts. You may experience feelings of guilt, anger, fear or sorrow. In some cases, death may bring a sense of relief.
* You may experience physical sensations, such as headache, nausea, coldness, sweating or muscle tension.
* You may have trouble falling asleep or sleep only intermittently, despite feeling very tired.
* You may find yourself going over again and again what happened, or it may pop up suddenly in the middle of some other situation.
* You may feel a need to work out in your mind what happened, for example, find a cause or guilty party for what happened.
* You may fear a reoccurrence of the shock or that the incident will repeat itself.

**Possible feelings and reactions over the weeks that follow:**

* restlessness, unease, irritability, anger: you may lose your temper more easily
* anguish, anxiety, feelings of depression, apathy
* oversensitive or touchy, or you find yourself misinterpreting other people
* difficulties concentrating or remembering things
* numbness, feelings of emptiness
* It is good to remember that the same event can arouse very different reactions in different people.

**Taking care of yourself**

* Remember that your reactions are normal. They are common reactions to an uncommon situation.
* **Share your experiences with others, including feelings that frighten or seem odd to you.** Share with your friends the feelings you are experiencing, and also listen to their experiences.
* You can deal with your feelings also by acting, doing things like drawing, painting, or through movement or music.
* Crying can give you relief.
* Shock can cause a loss of appetite, so **remember to eat.**
* Exercise decreases stress in the body. Going for a walk can make it easier to fall asleep at night.
* Avoid excessive use of alcohol.
* Insofar as possible, maintain your usual routines, like going to work, studying, etc.

Your reactions to shock will diminish over time. Powerful emotional reactions and going through the shock of the event repeatedly in your mind are normal ways of dealing with the event. Little by little, the shock will subside and be assimilated as part of your life story. You will find that life goes on, albeit somewhat differently than before.

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**When is it good to seek help?**

Seek professional help **immediately** if:

* You have little desire to live or you are thinking or behaving self-destructively.

Seek professional help, at the latest, if you have any of the following symptoms a month after the event:

* You continually feel anxious, depressed or stressed.
* Continued difficulties sleeping.
* You are unable to concentrate.
* You are unable to study or work.
* You have physical symptoms that do not seem to have a cause.
* You have no one to talk to.
* You are withdrawing from human relationships.
* You are using alcohol, other drugs or medicines excessively.