

If you have been involved in an unusual or traumatic event (loss of a loved one, job or property or an injury or serious threat) you may experience reactions that are out of the ordinary for you.

- The event may create a stress response which can result in changes in your usual physical or emotional reactions.
- The following reactions are not uncommon. These reactions are NORMAL however.
- Often the reactions appear immediately after the event but they may appear hours, days or even weeks later after a horrible event.
- Some people may not be affected physically or emotionally at all – and this too is quite normal
- Seeking help does not imply craziness or weakness.
- Sometimes the particular traumatic event was just too powerful to manage alone.

Here are some very common, normal signs and symptoms of a stress reaction, they do not require medical help unless they persist for a long time :

Physical



nausea	upset stomach	diarrhoea
chills	tremors (lips, hands)	profuse sweating
dizziness	feeling un-co-ordinated	rapid heart beat
muscle aches	sleep disturbance	headaches
rapid breathing	increased blood pressure	
chest pain	<i>(should be checked at GP or hospital)</i>	

Thinking



slowed thinking	difficulty making decisions
confusion	difficulty in problem solving
disorientation	difficulty calculating
memory problems	difficulty concentrating
distressing dreams	difficulty naming common objects
poor attention span	seeing the event over & over

Emotional



anxiety	feeling isolated	guilt
grief	depression	sadness
feeling lost	feeling abandoned	fear
wanting to hide	worry about others	anger
irritability	feeling numb	startled
shocked	wanting to limit contact with others	

If the symptoms described above are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, the traumatised person may need professional counselling.

There are many people who can support you locally - contact us or a psychologist or social worker or your local community mental health team or GP for confidential support.



Just call us: **5358 7400**

Stawell - 8 - 22 Patrick St

Ararat - 60 High Street

Horsham -25 David St

Lifeline **13 11 14**

Men's Line **1300 78 99 78**

Things that may help you cope

While these reactions can be alarming and unsettling its important to remember that you are not "falling apart" or losing your mind. Trying some of the following hints may help ease the emotional pain associated with a traumatic event.

For Yourself

- **Periods of rest alternating with physical activity (chop wood, walk) will help with some of the physical reactions**
- **Contact friends, family or workmates – reach out to them for support**
- **You are not alone – others are also going through similar experices**
- **People do care so don't isolate yourself**
- **Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or periods of up to a day or so,**
- **Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less painful,**
- **Maintain as normal a schedule as possible – structure your time,**
- **Eat well balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it),**
- **Don't make any big life changes until you have settled down**
- **Do nice things for yourself, walk the dog, take a warm fragrant bath, listen to music**
- **Express your feelings as they arise, you may feel angry but don't take it out on a person or animal instead go for a short walk, move away, exercise, chop wood, or something else to displace your anger.**
- **Talk to people who love you,**
- **Find a good counsellor if the feelings become prolonged or too intense.**

For Family Members & Friends

- listen carefully – don't give advice
- spend time with the traumatised person,
- offer your assistance and a listening ear, even if they have not asked for help,
- reassure them that they are safe,
- help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children,
- give them some private time,
- don't take their anger or other feelings personally,
- don't tell them that they are "lucky" it wasn't worse - traumatised people are not consoled by those statements. Instead tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand them.