

## **Normal reactions to trauma.**

These reactions can be uncomfortable but they are normal in the days and weeks after the trauma. Usually, as time goes by, these feelings get less and less, and eventually they go away completely.

- Trouble sleeping
- Changes in your appetite
- Feeling tired or irritable
- Having nightmares
- Feeling nervous
- Feeling "numb" or having no feelings at all
- Feeling "jumpy" or like you need to check around you all the time
- Needing to keep your loved ones close to you
- Having "flashbacks" - seeing a replay of the trauma in your mind

# TRAUMA

**For Adults**



What if I am not feeling better after a week or so?

If you continue to have trouble sleeping or if you are having other reactions that are uncomfortable, contact your doctor or counselor and let them know. If you don't have a doctor or counselor, you will find some numbers to call on this page to help you find one. You don't have to go through this by yourself.

For mental health resources, referrals and information on health insurance, call the Mayor's Health Line at (617) 534-5050.

In case of a mental health emergency call the BEST Team at (800) 981-HELP or call 911.

For information on-line, go to [www.talklisten.org](http://www.talklisten.org).

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## **Healing after Trauma.**

**How to deal with bad things that happen to you, your family and your community.**



# HEALING

## What is trauma?

All of us go through difficult times in our lives. An injury or the death of a loved one can cause grief and sadness.

But there are cases when a sad event can become a traumatic one. Trauma is when the sad event is unusually frightening or threatening - either because it is unexpected or because it is very violent. For instance, the death of a child or a string of violent events in a neighborhood can be traumatic not only for those directly involved but many others as well. Trauma can cause great distress and disruption to your everyday life.

## What happens after you have been through trauma?

A traumatic event can affect you mentally, physically and emotionally. You may be surprised to learn that after a traumatic event, your body responds by releasing chemicals. These chemicals (also called hormones) can cause changes in your mind and your body that are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. These reactions are normal and can be different for each person.

If you have had a lot of other trauma in your life, you may find yourself remembering those painful losses from the past even more. This is normal too. But you may need extra support to help you feel better.

## What can you do to feel better and to

There are a lot of different things that you can do to heal in the days and weeks after trauma. Since most of the reaction to trauma is felt in your body, the most important thing that you can do is to take care of yourself. Some things that you should focus on in the period of time after the trauma are:

### Spend time with family and friends.

You may feel like being around people who you love and care about. Make time in your schedule to seek them out and let them know that it helps you to have their company.

### Connect with your doctor or counselor.

You may want to contact your doctor or counselor and let them know that you have been through a traumatic event. He or she may have some suggestions for you since they are aware of your medical history.

**Take care of your body.** Since your body reacts to trauma, you should pay attention to make sure you are eating, drinking lots of water and doing moderate exercise. Eating will help your body maintain strength and drinking water can help to cleanse your system. Walking briskly for 20 minutes can relieve stress.

**Talk about what happened when you are ready.** You should not force yourself to talk about the trauma if you don't feel ready. But if you do feel like talking, seek out your clergy, counselor or doctor and tell them as much of the story as you want to tell.

**Get enough sleep.** Even if you are having trouble sleeping, it is a good idea to lie down and rest at night. Getting some exercise during the day may help you get to sleep easier. Resist the temptation to drink alcohol or take drugs to help you sleep. If you are still unable to sleep after a few days, call your doctor or counselor.

**Maintain as normal a routine as possible.** You may feel like doing nothing and avoiding your usual activities, like work, school, church or recreation. But even though you feel different, it may help you to stick as closely as possible to your usual routine so that you can maintain a sense of normalcy.

**Be patient.** Healing from trauma takes time. It may take weeks or months until you feel like yourself again. Reach out for help if you feel like you are "stuck" or if you feel like you are getting worse.

**Be easy on yourself.** Sometimes after a traumatic event, people start to blame themselves or think about ways that they could have prevented the trauma, even if they really couldn't have. Other people feel ashamed, or start to imagine that the whole thing was their fault. This is a time to be easy on yourself and realize that it is normal to have these kinds of thoughts.