

Self-Care Strategies

People have varying reactions to any demanding or stressful event:

How strongly the event impacted the individual determines his or her response afterward, as do the person's past experiences, values, attitudes, beliefs and personal support systems. Some of the wide range of normal responses are listed below.

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL
Nausea or upset stomach	Continued thoughts and images of the event	Anxiety, fear and worry
Changes in appetite	Fearful thoughts	Sadness, withdrawal
Headaches or muscle aches	Difficulty concentrating	Grief, feelings of helplessness
Difficulty sleeping	Distressing dreams	Anger and irritability
Fatigue	Feeling "dazed" or disoriented	Numbness

These responses are usually temporary. You can help yourself cope with these reactions through self-care. Self-care can enhance your emotional stamina and help you begin to return your life to some semblance of normalcy.

Below are some examples of self-care:

- Remember that your reactions are normal. Give yourself permission to recover at your own pace.
- Talk or write about the event or your reactions.
- Exercise. Even a little exercise, such as a short walk, can help you physically and emotionally.
- Spend time with supportive people.
- Stay away from mood-altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.
- Practice stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, progressive relaxation, etc.
- Lower expectations of what you "should be doing."
- Nurture yourself. Get plenty of rest, eat healthy meals, take a hot bath, a walk in the woods, listen to relaxing music, etc.
- Keep as normal a schedule as possible.
- Focus on those things that you do have control over, instead of events beyond your control.

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