



COPING WITH TRAUMA



Unfortunately, traumatic events can happen in our lives or they can happen to others and affect us indirectly. We can never be too sure how we will react or feel about these situations because we have all had different experiences in our lives which will affect our own individual response.

Some of us may cope perfectly well, while others may find coping extremely difficult. It's important to remember that we all deal with situations differently and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to respond. Understanding how we should feel in these situations, and what is considered 'normal', is important to help us get through them in the best way possible.

This handout will explain some ways you might react and provide strategies to help you cope.

NORMAL REACTIONS

Reactions to traumatic events will vary from person to person as can reaction times. Reactions can include changes in behaviour, physical wellbeing, mental health, thinking patterns, belief systems and social interactions. Some common reactions include:

- Anger, moodiness, and irritability
- Becoming obsessive
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Crying
- Denial and disbelief
- Disinterest in previous activities
- Emotional numbness
- Forgetfulness
- Grief
- Guilt
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Isolation or withdrawal from others
- Panic
- Questioning faith or religion
- Sleeping too much
- Social withdrawal

Some of these symptoms may not surface for a few days or even weeks so we need to remain vigilant for some time.

If you have symptoms that persist longer than two weeks, it's important to seek some professional help. MATES in Construction is available to connect you with help, should you need some assistance.

COPING STRATEGIES

There are a number of ways we can get through difficult times and finding a way that's right for you is important. Here are some suggestions you could consider.

TALK WITH OTHERS AND LISTEN



- Talk to someone about how you're feeling - this helps remind you that what you're feeling is normal and it may also help someone else going through a similar situation.
- Speak with a professional if your feelings are particularly intrusive, intense or persistent.
- Contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if you have one, or a doctor, counsellor or psychologist.
- Accept your thoughts and feelings and allow yourself to experience them.
- Trying to suppress your feelings will only prolong them and they will continue to resurface.
- Talk to a Connector or ASIST worker and let them connect you to help.
- Listen to your family or friends if they say you are behaving differently. They know you best and have good insight into any changes you may not be aware of.
- If a co-worker or friend confides in you, it's important to listen and not give advice.
- Help someone in need connect with support, such as a Connector or ASIST worker.

LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS



- Keep an eye on your mates – if they are acting out of character, let them know you've noticed and ask how they are feeling.
- Highlight the danger of being distracted and that it's in all our best interests to keep an eye on each other so we don't have another incident or tragedy.
- Check in on a co-worker if they are absent and make sure they are OK, especially if they were close to the incident.

BE ACTIVE



- Exercise helps put things in perspective.
- Try going for a walk or jog, hit the gym, go to the beach, play sport, or go for a hike in the bush – just 30 minutes can make a big difference.
- Do something you love with family and friends to keep you grounded and focused on what is important to you.
- Avoid over drinking – alcohol suppresses our brain's happy chemical and can make coping more of a struggle.
- Get enough sunshine and drink plenty of water.

CONTACT US

If you need some help or know someone who does, contact MATES in Construction.

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