

VICTIM AND WITNESS REACTIONS TO TRAUMA



When an individual witnesses or is victimized by violence, they experience the symptoms of trauma. Over time, as people work through their feelings, they learn to move through the trauma and are once again able to focus on their lives and interests. If a victim or witness needs more than you are able to provide, seek professional assistance. (Many counselors can assist in working through feelings.)

The following are expected reactions to trauma. Individuals may experience different reactions at different times. Remember: most of these reactions will diminish over time and are completely NORMAL.

- Shock, disbelief, numbness
- Anxiety, panicky feelings, hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle response
- Having intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, or unwanted memories of the event
- Loss of sense of security and safety
- Feeling detached from others
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Clinging to family and friends
- Anger, irritability, being argumentative
- Blaming themselves for the tragedy ("If only I. . .")
- Nightmares, difficulty falling or staying asleep, sleeping more than usual
- Changes in appetite
- Feeling like emotions are out of control ("I'll never stop crying")
- Regression: behaviors exhibited at an earlier age, i.e. sleeping with lights on
- Difficulty concentrating
- Deep sadness or depression
- Physical complaints such as headache, stomachache, muscle tension, nausea

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