

A GUIDE TO Self-Help



Aware Psychology & Coaching

Acute Stress Reactions

Most early stress reactions gradually fade, although initial reactions can be very strong. It is normal to feel distressed, think a lot about the event, feel tense or irritable, and feel numb or cut-off from others. You may want to stay away from where the incident happened, avoid thinking about it, get upset when you are reminded about it, and wish you could block memories and images out of your mind. These reactions are common and are part of the natural healing process.

COPING SKILLS

- Talk with family and friends about your experience
- Allow yourself time on your own to think
- Express your worries and fears
- Let images or thoughts come and go
- Keep reminding yourself that you have got through hard times before
- Rest and use simple relaxation techniques
- Breathe deeply and calmly
- Think about your strengths and abilities; write them down
- Maintain your regular routine
- Eat small amounts of nutritious food
- Reduce stimulants such as coffee and cigarettes
- Exercise regularly, even if you don't really feel like it
- Keep making small regular decisions
- Do one thing every day that you usually enjoy
- Be kind to yourself, allow that it might take a bit of time to adjust
- Gradually face the situations and memories you may wish to avoid
- Keep checking that you are thinking about the event in a realistic way

UNHELPFUL WAYS OF COPING

- Increased alcohol, cigarette, or drug use.
- Making big life decisions in the first few weeks after the event
- Avoidance of places or thoughts to do with the event.
- Telling yourself you are going crazy or weak.
- Withdrawing from others.
- Wait until you're so stressed or exhausted that you can't fully benefit from help.

POSITIVE CHANGES

Sometimes struggling with challenging life events results in positive changes.

- Enhanced appreciation of family and friends.
- Closeness to others, including those who went through the experience with you.
- More enjoyment of the here and now, living life to the fullest.
- Increased inner strength and knowledge that difficulties can be handled.
- Appreciation of the value of life.
- Determination and resolve.