

Dealing with Trauma

Trauma is the prolonged feeling of fear or stress following an upsetting, dangerous, and/or violent event.

Trauma can be a temporary reaction, or it can result in a prolonged condition, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Trauma can be caused by surviving a dangerous situation, such as a sexual or physical assault, or military combat. It can also be caused by other frightening events, such as a car accident, natural disaster, or pandemic. Regardless of the cause, feeling traumatized is not a sign of weakness, and you should not downplay it or pretend it doesn't exist.

The following are some of the symptoms associated with trauma

- ▶ stress, anxiety, or fear that the traumatic event will happen again
- ▶ avoiding situations associated with the event
- ▶ flashbacks in response to "triggers" (reminders of the event) and/or sensory cues (smells, sights, or sounds)
- ▶ being startled by loud noises or sudden movements
- ▶ trouble focusing or thinking clearly
- ▶ forgetting things / brain fog
- ▶ nightmares
- ▶ irritability
- ▶ depression-like symptoms, such as feelings of sadness, loneliness, and/or loss of interest
- ▶ physical symptoms, such as fatigue, sweating, and/or shaking

Dealing with Trauma

Dealing with trauma can be scary, frustrating, and isolating. Here are some tips for working through it.

- ▶ Talk about it. Share your thoughts with friends, family members, a counselor, and/or a doctor. Don't try to deal with trauma on your own.
- ▶ Draw the incident or write about it in a journal. Doing these things can be very helpful.
- ▶ Give yourself time. Be confident that you will feel better in the future, and that these feelings are temporary. Don't get frustrated if you think you can't feel or act "normal" right away.
- ▶ Do things that relax you and make you feel good. Be with friends, go for walks, read a book.
- ▶ Refrain from using drugs or alcohol, or engaging in other destructive behaviors. Using unhealthy behaviors to cope with your feelings will only prolong the trauma or make it worse.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a condition that develops around 3-6 months following a traumatic event. While most individuals feel traumatized following a traumatic event, only about 10% develop PTSD.

PTSD symptoms are similar to the symptoms of trauma, but they are longer lasting and more severe. PTSD can greatly affect one's relationships, school-work, and physical health. *Individuals suffering from PTSD need to get help.*

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide following trauma, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline is available to help: 1-800-273-8255. You can also chat online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.