

Am I Normal? Reactions to Overwhelming Stressful Events

Most people have some reaction to a traumatic event such as: 1) the death or near death of a friend, classmate, or someone you know; 2) Being physically or sexually abused; 3) other overwhelming situations. These experiences may affect your ability to function and take care of yourself. Everyone's reaction is different and based on personal experiences. It may take a while to have a reaction, and sometimes you may not feel a reaction at all. People often don't realize they are reacting. Sometimes feelings are triggered by having something similar happen at a later time.

Reactions to death or near death can be:

- Physical reactions
- Emotional reactions
- Changes in behavior
- Increased risk taking

Common Reactions to Overwhelming Events are:

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| • Feeling stressed | • Fatigue | • Feeling Anxious |
| • Nightmares | • Sadness | • Trouble Concentrating |
| • Apprehension | • Anger | • Increase in Risk-Taking |
| • Change in Appetite | • Sleep Problems | • Increase in use of Alcohol or Drugs |
| • Withdrawal | • Headaches | • Feeling Overwhelmed |
| • Irritability | • Feeling Numb | • Re-enacting the event over in your mind |

What Can I Do to Feel Better?

- Get involved in activities that you can start and finish in one day
- Eat healthy foods and get physical exercise
- Talk openly with a friend or person you trust about your feelings
- Spend time doing things you enjoy, even if this is hard
- Support a friend – this is remarkably healing
- Listen to music you think is positive

When Do I Need to Get Additional Help?

- If you continue to have trouble functioning normally, weeks or months after the events
- When you have a friend who has these reactions and is not getting better
- When you have thoughts of harming or killing yourself or someone else
- When you feel like the reactions are running your life
- If you are feeling overwhelmed or out of control
- When you are not taking care of yourself

Where Can I Get Help?

- Parent, Friend (who is not overwhelmed), or Relative: _____
- Others (who would you put in?): _____
- School Guidance Counselor or nurse: _____
- Pastor or another adult you trust: _____
- Counseling Services: _____
- **National Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (prepare to be put on hold)**
- **Local Youth Crisis Line: 1-800-371-4373**