

Coping With a Traumatic Event

Information about Coping With a Traumatic Event

Exposure to a traumatic event can have a strong impact on an individual's well-being, and the road to recovery can involve many intense, complicated feelings and emotions. It's a process that takes time, and you may not be totally back on track after a day, a week, or a month. Understanding how people typically react to trauma can be helpful in the recovery process.

What might I experience after a traumatic event?

A traumatic event can affect people emotionally, physically, and mentally. These experiences are considered "normal reactions to abnormal events," and will usually decrease with time. Below are some common feelings you may experience:

- Continued thoughts and images of the event
- Wanting to stay away from the scene of the event and/or fear of returning to work
- Difficulty concentrating, or feeling "dazed" or confused
- Difficulty handling tasks or making decisions
- Increased agitation, restlessness, or frequent sitting and staring into space
- Feelings of guilt or wishing you could have done something differently
- Wanting to separate yourself from family members, co-workers, and friends
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Headaches or other physical reactions such as stomachaches or feeling tired all the time
- A desire to use alcohol or drugs to numb your feelings

What can I do to feel better after a traumatic event?

If you have seen or been touched by a traumatic event, the following actions may help you deal with what you're feeling:

- **Talk to someone; stay connected.** Use your support system. Talk to friends, your spouse, family members, or a counselor—people who are likely to be supportive and understanding. Talking about the event seems to help many people, even though you may feel uncomfortable discussing it. Staying connected with others during this stressful period is one of the best things you can do to help you feel better sooner.
- **Exercise and relax.** Physical exercise can be physically grounding, mentally distracting, and helpful in reducing the tension related to the traumatic event. Relaxation methods (meditating, praying, practicing breathing exercises, spending time in nature, listening to quiet music, etc.) can also be helpful.
- **Keep active and retain your everyday routines when possible.** Try to keep to your normal schedule of working, eating, sleeping, bathing, exercising, etc.
- **Eat well and try to get a good night's sleep.** These may not be easy to do, but it's important to stay focused on your health during times of intense stress.



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- **Avoid using alcohol or drugs to change your mood.**
Using alcohol or drugs can delay your healing process by affecting your judgment and behavior in ways that can interfere with your ability to cope with the traumatic event in a safe and healthy way.

If concentration problems, nightmares or flashbacks, sleeping problems, feelings of depression, shock and numbness, confusion, guilt, or anger do not begin to subside over two weeks, or if these feelings seem unbearable, **it is important to seek professional support, including medical care**, to assist with coping and recovery.

If you or someone you know is going through a difficult time or struggling to cope with a traumatic event, **support is here for you** 24 hours a day. Members of the NFL family—current and former players, coaches, team and league staff, and their family members—can call the independent, confidential NFL Life Line at **(800) 506-0078**, or go to www.NFLLifeLine.org to chat online or take a self-check quiz. Members of the NFL family can also access counseling and mental health support through the NFL Player Engagement Transition Assistance Program by calling Cigna at **(866) 421-8628**.