



A Program of Support for Children and Teens experiencing Trauma or Loss

Common Trauma Reactions

Listed below are common trauma reactions associated with trauma, this is not exclusive. In the weeks following or even years later, expect these reactions:

- Distressing recollections or memories of the event, including images or thoughts that happen without warning at the strangest times.
- Distressing dreams of the event or difficulty going to sleep for fear of having bad dreams about what happened.
- Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring.
- Intense distress from exposure to internal cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event (e.g. fear or anxiety).
- Physical reactions and sensations upon exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble the traumatic event (e.g. nausea, difficulty breathing, faintness, fear, worry and hurt).
- Trying to avoid thoughts, feelings or conversations associated with the trauma.
- Trying to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma.
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma.
- Diminished interest or participation in significant activities, personal relationships, school or work.
- Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others.
- Unable to experience pleasure, joy or loving feelings.
- Sense of foreshortened future (e.g. do not expect to have a career, marriage, or children, or a normal life).
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Inability or outbursts of anger.
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering.
- Hypervigilance – chronic state of fear/intense worry that something else is about to happen, constant state of alert.
- Exaggerated startle response (e.g. jumpy, easily startled by sounds, sights, smells, or situations that remind you what happened).

It is not unusual to experience some or all of these reactions during the weeks that follow a traumatic event. When the trauma is a disaster or other external event, reactions may be experienced even longer, especially when physical reminders of the trauma cannot be avoided or when the details of the incident are kept alive in the media for an extended period of time. If there is no appropriate intervention provided, trauma reactions can last for years after the experience or surface years later.

