

# Common Reactions to Trauma and Tips on Self-Care

From National Center for PTSD

Common reactions to a trauma may include:

- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Feeling detached or unconcerned about others
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Feeling jumpy and getting startled easily at sudden noises
- Feeling on guard and constantly alert
- Having disturbing dreams and memories or flashbacks
- Having work or school problems

You may also experience more physical reactions such as:

- Stomach upset and trouble eating
- Trouble sleeping and feeling very tired
- Pounding heart, rapid breathing, feeling edgy
- Sweating
- Severe headache when thinking of the event
- Failure to engage in regular exercise, diet, and/or health care
- Increased appetite or substance use

You may notice emotional reactions such as:

- Feeling nervous, helpless, fearful, sad
- Feeling shocked, numb, and not able to feel love or joy
- Avoiding people, places, and things related to the event
- Feeling angry
- Becoming easily upset or agitated
- Blaming yourself or having negative views of oneself or the world
- Being withdrawn
- Loss of intimacy or feeling detached

How to take care of yourself....

- Talk with family, friends, clergy, mentors – they are your personal support system.
- Seek out professional support. Resources on and off campus are included below.
- Understand that recovery is an ongoing gradual process. It doesn't happen through suddenly being "cured" and it doesn't mean that you will forget what happened. Most people will recover from trauma naturally.
- Healing doesn't mean forgetting traumatic events. It doesn't mean you will have no pain or bad feelings when thinking about them. It doesn't mean that you no longer care about your loss. Healing may mean fewer symptoms or symptoms that bother you less. Healing means more confidence that you will be able to cope with your memories and symptoms. You will be better able to manage your feelings.
- Know your own limits and boundaries. If you need to take time and space to heal and needs, taking a break from some commitments may be helpful to some people. Others may find it helpful to continue with typical activities and maintain a sense of routine.