



## *Information to help individuals following a traumatic event*

Being directly or even indirectly involved in an event where there has been a threat to your sense of personal safety can cause a range of intense and sometimes confusing emotions, such as:

- Numbness /emptiness
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Regret
- Anger
- Relief
- Grief
- Helplessness

These emotional responses are normal or expected responses to an abnormal event. These feelings will be intense and pervasive immediately following the trauma and the days after. The intensity starts to feel manageable over time and with support from loved ones and friends. People may feel powerless and afraid and want to stay safe by staying at home. Evidence shows that returning to normal day-to-day routines helps people to recover.

### **Self-help strategies**

Traumatic events impact on people in different ways. It's important to acknowledge what you are going through, or have been through, a highly distressing abnormal event and that it's normal to expect to have a psychological reaction to it. There are some simple things you can do to help you process and come to terms with your experience:

- acknowledge your emotions and thoughts and share them with people you trust. Denial or refusal to accept your feelings may delay your recovery
- Keep in touch with your friends, family and colleagues
- Pay attention to what you need or require from situations at the moment and express this to people if they are in a position to support you
- Understand and be aware of your specific and unique reaction to the traumatic event
- Be patient with yourself. It takes time to recover from the intense emotions and difficult thoughts, and so don't expect your reactions to return to normal immediately
- Maintain or re-establish your normal routines as soon as possible



- Get some rest and have some quiet time, even if sleeping is difficult
- Use relaxation or meditation exercises if you feel tense and anxious.

Sometimes when incidents or events touch and impact many lives there is comfort in gathering with other people to talk, pray, vigil, rally or something which gives people a sense of community and a feeling of belonging together as in we will get through this together.

### **Avoid things that don't help**

- Excessive exposure to information about the incident, especially if you notice it has a negative impact on you e.g. too much social media
- Overuse of alcohol, nicotine, coffee and other stimulants
- Working to excess or keeping yourself so busy you have no time to think
- Withdrawing and isolating yourself from others
- Keeping your thoughts and feelings to yourself rather than talking about them
- Making important life decisions or major changes during recovery.

It is common to worry about burdening our friends and family by talking about our feelings, or to feel vulnerable about discussing our feelings with people who may not have the knowledge or capacity to support us. If you would like to speak confidentially with a professional counsellor who will understand the nature of your reactions and who can help your recovery from this event, contact AccessEAP to arrange your free counselling sessions.

**For New Zealand - please call 08 0032 7669**

**For Australia – please call 1800 818 728**

