

## WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

People react differently to trauma and have had different life experiences which impact on their reaction to a trauma. People also have different support networks. Some people benefit from extra help in overcoming the effects of a traumatic experience. You may need professional assistance if:

- Your responses become too intense or last for too long
- You have no friends or family with whom to share your experience and feelings
- You feel there is an impact on your relationships or work
- You continue to use alcohol or drugs to excess.

## WHERE TO SEEK HELP

- Local community health centre (check the white pages)
- Local GP
- If you are the victim of a violent crime or your trauma is a result of witnessing an act of violence, you may be eligible for counselling through Victims Services, Attorney Generals Department. For further information please phone (02) 9374 3111 or 1800 069 054.

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## COPING WITH TRAUMA

### Adjusting to the experience

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## COMMON REACTIONS

- Most people experience some kind of emotional or physical reaction which may last after the actual event.
- Although everybody reacts differently, there are a number of common reactions which can be thought of as normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- The reactions are part of dealing with trauma and being aware of these normal reactions can provide reassurance that you are not 'going mad or crazy'.

## COMMON RESPONSES

### Physical

- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Feeling on edge
- Changed appetite, stomach upset
- Fainting, dizziness, sweating, shaking
- Easily startled, feeling nervous
- Heart palpitations
- Difficulty breathing

### Emotional

- Shock – numbness, disbelief, feeling cut-off from others
- Fear – fear of safety for others, fear of losing control
- Sadness
- Anger – about what happened, why me?
- Guilt – regrets about things done/not done
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### Thinking

- Flashbacks – strong intrusive memories of the event
- Dreams/nightmares about the event
- Slow thinking, confusion and disorientation
- Difficulty making decisions, concentration, problem solving, naming common objects

### Behavioural

- Avoidance – avoiding place of event or reminders of event
- Loss of interest or motivation
- Socially detached, easily irritated
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- More cautious

## COPING WITH RESPONSES

### Physical

- Get plenty of rest
- Eat a well balanced diet
- Regular exercise and relaxation
- Reduce use of stimulants such as tea, coffee, cigarettes and chocolate

### Emotional

- While the feelings are unpleasant, remind yourself that your reaction is normal
- Talk about events and how you are feeling to people who care about you

### Thinking

- Recurring thoughts, memories or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them. They will normally decrease over time and become less painful
- Identify the positive aspects of the experience for you and your family

### Behaviour

- Try to resume a normal routine as quickly as possible – but take it easy
- Do not allow yourself to become isolated from people
- Do things that make you feel good
- Accept support

### Things to avoid

- Avoid overuse of drugs or alcohol
- Avoid making major life decisions in the period following the trauma