

# Common Symptoms after a Traumatic Event

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

After experiencing a traumatic event, it is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience a wide range of emotional or physical reactions. These responses may appear immediately after the event or some time later. They may last for a few days, a few weeks, or even longer. Don't worry – these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. It's important to understand that, like the symptoms of the flu, your reactions to trauma will run their course and you will feel better in time. The following are some of the most common symptoms.

## Feelings

- Fear
- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Depression, sadness, grief
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Feeling numb
- Irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Inappropriate emotional response
- Anger
- Guilt, survivor guilt
- Denial

## Thoughts

- Confusion
- Difficulty in concentration and making decisions
- Memory problems
- Shortened attention span
- Overly critical
- Preoccupation with the event
- Flashbacks
- Hyper-vigilance
- Overly sensitive

## Behaviors

- Increased consumption of alcohol or other chemicals
- Hyper-alert to environment
- Suspiciousness

- Emotional outbursts, loss of control
- Changes from typical behavior
- Avoiding thoughts, feelings or situations relating to the event
- Changes in communication
- Changes in sexual behavior
- Social withdrawal or silence
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Inability to rest

## Physical

- Nausea/diarrhea
- Shallow breathing
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Twitches or tremors
- Dizziness or faintness
- Chills or sweating
- Fatigue
- Changes in appetite
- Sleep disturbances and nightmares
- Headaches
- Grinding teeth

Information Provided by: New York State  
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(continued)

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For additional information, please contact:

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| ▶ Connecticut Helps, Office of Family Support                    | (860) 418-6262 |
| ▶ United Way Infoline  | 2-1-1          |
| ▶ Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services | (800) 446-7348 |
| ▶ Connecticut Department of Children and Families                | (860) 550-6484 |
| ▶ Connecticut Clearinghouse                                      | (800) 232-4424 |

