

It's O.K to Feel the Way You Do

You've just had a very difficult experience. It is very common for people to experience emotional and physical aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event. Don't be worried. These are **NORMAL** reactions of **NORMAL** people going through a **NORMAL** recovery from a very **ABNORMAL** situation. *It's O.K. to feel the way you do...*

Sometimes these emotional and physical aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic situation. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some case, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for you to manage entirely on your own.

Here are some *very common* signs and symptoms of a stress reaction in a traumatized person.

| Body | Thinking | Feeling | Relationships |
|--|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nausea | Slowed thinking | Anxiety | Feeling abandoned |
| Upset stomach | Difficulty making decisions | Fear | Isolation |
| Chills | Confusion | Anger | Irritability |
| Tremors (lips, hands) | Difficulty in problem-solving | Guilt | Worry about others |
| Feeling uncoordinated | Difficulty calculating | Startled | Wanting to hide |
| Profuse sweating | Difficulty concentrating | Depression | Wanting to limit contact with others |
| Sleeping disturbances | Memory problems | Feeling numb | Unusual anger |
| Muscle aches | Disorientation (especially to time and place) | Sadness | Etc. |
| Headaches | Distressing dreams | Feeling lost | |
| Diarrhea | Poor attention span | Shock | |
| Rapid heart beat | Seeing the events over and over | Etc. | |
| Rapid breathing | Difficulty naming common objects | | |
| Chest pain (should be checked at hospital) | | | |
| Increase blood pressure | | | |
| Etc. | | | |

No one can deny that this was a difficult experience for you, but it's important to know that, like the flu, your reactions will run their course and you will feel better in time. Continue to "talk out" your feelings and reactions. Withdrawal and "sealing over" can make recovery more difficult. When it's especially tough, remember, *it's O.K. to feel the way you do...*