

After experiencing a traumatic event, or a series of stressor events, it is very common and quite normal for people to experience a wide range of emotional and/or physical reactions. Some responses may appear immediately, some will come much time later. The length of time may vary from a few days to a few weeks or longer. **These are normal reactions to an abnormal event, which feels very abnormal.** It is important to remember that the symptoms of grief have to run their course, much like the flu. Self-care is an important aspect to alleviate the symptoms (drink plenty of fluids, eat balanced meals and get plenty of rest).

Symptoms

Physical	Emotional	Thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000-yard stare • Nausea/diarrhea • Shallow breathing • Dizziness/faintness • Chills or sweating • Easily startled • Fatigued • Change in appetite • Sleep disturbance • Nightmares • Headaches • Grinding teeth • Inability to rest • More susceptible to colds, flu, illness • Health/physical problems more evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Anxiety • Depression • Sadness • Feeling hopeless or helpless • Feeling numb • Emotional response uncharacteristic • Anger • Guilt • Denial • Agitation • Feeling overwhelmed • Irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling confused • Difficulty making decisions/concentrating • Memory problems • Shortened attention span • Overly critical • Preoccupied with event • Inability to recall all or part of event • Overly sensitive • Flashbacks • Hypervigilance
Behavioral	Spiritual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social withdrawal • Silence • Questioning • Unexpected tearfulness/anger • Change in typical reactions/behaviors • Avoiding thoughts and/or feelings related to event/loss • Difficulty talking or writing • Change in sexual desire • Loss/increase in appetite • Feeling uncoordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptiness • Loss of meaning • Doubt • Feeling unforgiving • Martyrdom or punishment • Looking for magic • Loss of direction • Cynicism • Apathy • Needing to prove self • Alienation • Mistrust 	<i>Continued</i>

Coping Skills

Physical	Emotional	Thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Visit doctor and dentist • Moderate exercise • Routine sleep patterns • Minimize caffeine • OK to ask for help • Eat well-balanced and regular meals • Drink water • Avoid alcohol • Remember you have options • Breathe/take breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Give yourself permission to experience your feelings and label them • OK to ask for help • Be assertive if needed • Keep open communication with others • Remember you have options • Sense of humor • Find a vent partner • Join a support group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Write things down • Make small daily decisions • OK to ask for help • Plan for future • Gather information to make decisions • Anticipate needs • Have a "Plan B" • Remember you have options • Review previous successful problem solving

Behavioral	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Have alone time. Caution: DO NOT isolate • Limit demands on time & energy • Help others with tasks • OK to ask for help • Do activities that were previously enjoyable • Maintain a routine • Find new hobbies • Remember you have options • Set goals • Have a plan • Relax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Discuss your beliefs w/clergy or friend • Meditation/prayer • OK to ask for help • Practice the rituals of your beliefs • Spiritual retreat • Remember you have options • Find spiritual support • Visit other churches • Read spiritual literature

The understanding and support of loved ones usually cause the stress reactions to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that this particular event was just too powerful for someone to manage by him or herself.