

Feeling low, What can I do?

Emotion is part of your body, don't neglect it! It is common and normal for everyone to experience emotional reactions; you may feel angry, worried, even stressed! When we have any of these reactions for a short period of time, it is very helpful to help us “survive” and protect ourselves or others from perceived threat. However, our emotions, e.g. stress or fear, will affect our physical body and reactions.

Trauma

Unforeseen and terrible events can sometimes occur in life. Trauma is a natural emotional response to a deeply distressing event that overwhelms a person's ability to cope.

Traumatic events are common in people's lives. In a World Health Organization study of 21 countries, some people reported witnessing violence (21.8%) or experiencing interpersonal violence (18.8%), accidents (17.7%), exposure to war (16.2%) or trauma to a loved one (12.5%), with the actual numbers estimated to be much higher. Other stressful situations which appear less severe may also trigger traumatic reactions in some people.

Everyone's reaction to a potentially traumatic experience is different. An event may have little impact on one person but cause another person to have severe distress. Survivors of traumatic events can experience unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, as well as physical symptoms such as headaches or nausea years after those events occur.

A person's mental and physical health, available support at the time of the event or past experiences and coping skills can influence how they respond to a traumatic event.

What are the symptoms of trauma?

Symptoms of trauma can affect our cognition, behaviours, emotions, and physical states.



Cognition

Having intrusive thoughts and memories or visual images of the traumatic event, nightmares, poor concentration and memory, disorientation, and confusion.



Behaviours

Avoiding places or activities that remind the person of the traumatic event, withdrawing from social interaction and activities, isolation, losing interest in normal activities, having emotional outbursts and difficulties with interpersonal relationships.



Emotions

Feelings of worry, fear, panic, sadness, numbness, detachment, guilt, shame, anger, and irritability.



Physical Body

Being in a state of excessive alertness, being easily startled, physical exhaustion, altered sleep patterns or disturbed sleep, nausea, dizziness, changes in appetite, headaches, and general pains.

How to cope with trauma?

Experiencing the above symptoms can certainly be distressing and discomforting. However, such symptoms are also part of a natural process that helps our minds and bodies to heal from traumatic experiences. Here are some ways that might help you manage these situations.



Don't blame yourself

Recognise that what you have experienced is distressing and remind yourself that it is therefore normal to have a reaction to it. Although you may feel inclined to block out thoughts relating to the event, if you can, it is better to gradually confront these thoughts, as this will help you to make sense of and come to terms with the traumatic experience. Try not to get angry and frustrated with yourself or blame yourself for being affected by the situation and feeling upset.



Express your feelings

Talk about the experience and how you are feeling to people whom you trust such as your family and close friends, instead of bottling up your feelings and attempting to move forward on your own. Try not to avoid activities or places for no reason, and talk to your family and friends about your needs. Help them to help you by letting them know when you are tired, need time out, or need a chance to talk or just be with someone.



Maintain a regular schedule

Avoid making any major decisions or life changes at this point in time. As far as possible, try to maintain a normal routine for your daily activities. Exercising regularly can help, but also give yourself time to rest if you feel tired. Set aside regular times for positive activities that you find help you to relax and reduce stress. This can be anything from reading, listening to music and cooking, to exercising and spending time with friends and family. To relax, you may also try out mindfulness techniques such as breathing exercises and meditation.

If you or your loved ones are experiencing persistent trauma symptoms that are disruptive to daily life, it is crucial that you speak to a mental health professional.

PLEASE REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.