

How to Help Trauma Recovery



Try to **keep up your usual routine** as much as possible.

Add activities that you find relaxing
Into your daily routine (e.g. Breathing exercises, colouring, knitting, seated yoga or listening to a podcast)



Talk about your experience with others when you feel able to.

Try and find a balance between thinking and talking about the trauma, and thinking and talking about things unrelated to the trauma – both are important!

Accept practical as well as emotional **support from others.**



Take care of yourself
Make sure you are well fed, hydrated and slept.



Humour

Such as watching a funny film can help release stress.

Be active

Within the recommendations of any physical rehabilitation you are engaging in.

When Should I Seek Specialist Support?

You should ask for specialist support if you are still experiencing difficulties 4 weeks after the traumatic experience. You may wish to ask for support if your symptoms are particularly distressing, your work and personal life is suffering, you feel numb or 'on edge' or you feel overwhelmed by your feelings.

Within the Major Trauma service we have a Psychology Service that will be able to provide further assessment and treatment. You can ask to be referred to the Psychology Service by contacting the Major Trauma Coordinators. Even if you haven't had an appointment with the service in a long time, you can still give us a call.



CONTACT STICKER

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment. To find out more about accessible formats contact:
fife.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.scot
or phone 01592 729130

NHS FIFE

Major Physical Trauma Psychology Service

What Is Trauma?

You have been given this leaflet as you are receiving input from the NHS Fife Major Trauma service.

This leaflet aims to give you helpful information about trauma, some of the symptoms you may be experiencing and some ideas of what can help.

What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response caused by threatening or distressing events. You can experience trauma from both **events that happen to you, or events you witness happening to others.**

Many people will go through some form of traumatic event in their lifetime, such as an unexpected death of a loved one or a car accident. It is important to remember that **what may be traumatic for one person, may not be traumatic for someone else.** People process traumatic events differently and the meaning and impact of that event is entirely personal.

Examples of trauma include:

- Bullying
- Serious accidents
- An attack
- A major natural disaster (e.g. Flash flooding)
- Being witness to violence

The Impact of Trauma

During and shortly after a traumatic event, the body goes into a physical state called the 'Acute Stress Response'. This means that the brain's threat detector (the amygdala) sounds the alarm and activates our 'Fight, Flight or Freeze' response. A sudden release of hormones increases heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate. All these changes in the body are designed to try and help you escape or overcome the danger.



In 'Fight, Flight or Freeze' the survival part of the brain is activated, and any responses or actions are driven by this. Working from the survival part of the brain means that we are not able to access the part of the brain that is involved in rational logical thinking, problem solving and new learning.



The 'Acute Stress Response' plays an important role in how we respond to threat. After a traumatic event, your brain will try to keep you safe and prepared for other traumatic events. You may find that you experience this when faced with reminders of past traumatic events. For example, if you have been in a road traffic accident, you may find that sitting in a car can cause a stress response.

What is Normal?

It is normal to be distressed after a traumatic event. You may need time and support to adjust to and process what you have been through. Everyone reacts differently and may need different amounts of time to regain a sense of normality.

It is common to have feelings of shock and denial straight after. You may also have longer term reactions such as:

Nightmares

Flashbacks

Anxiety

Unpredictable emotions

Fatigue

Headaches

Nausea

Poor concentration

Memory problems

It is common to also notice changes in your behaviour such as trying to avoid reminders of the trauma (e.g. conversations about the trauma, or going to the place where the trauma occurred).

These are normal reactions and for most people these symptoms will decrease over time. It may take some weeks for you to be able to come to terms with what has happened.