

# Common Reactions to Traumatic Experiences

Regional District of Central Okanagan RCMP Victim Services



**Who you are as a person, is not defined by what happened to you.**

A traumatic event offers an opportunity to foster resilience and effective coping skills that will serve you in the future. It is possible that through a traumatic experience, post traumatic growth can evolve. This is:

■ A positive change that comes from your resiliency after a traumatic experience.

■ An opportunity to become stronger and more confident as a person who faced trauma.



**Coping with trauma is a journey from how things were prior to what happened to how life will be afterwards.**

# Your reactions may vary in time, duration, and intensity.

Reaction	Symptom
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep/Appetite change
	<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches
	<input type="checkbox"/> Tremors
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweating
	<input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth
Behavioural	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn or clingy
	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance
	<input type="checkbox"/> Crying spells
	<input type="checkbox"/> Easily startled
	<input type="checkbox"/> Overly protective
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hyper-aware
	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk of self-destructive behaviours
Spiritual	<input type="checkbox"/> Questioning meaning of life
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness
	<input type="checkbox"/> Powerlessness
	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger at higher power
	<input type="checkbox"/> Disconnected
Cognitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Hindsight thinking
	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration
	<input type="checkbox"/> Confusion
	<input type="checkbox"/> Time distortion
	<input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares
	<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired memory
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lowered attention span
	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaying an event in your mind

Reaction	Symptom
Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/> Fear
	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety
	<input type="checkbox"/> Shock
	<input type="checkbox"/> Numb
	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger
	<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability
	<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling lost or abandoned
	<input type="checkbox"/> Over/Underwhelmed
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sadness/Depression
	<input type="checkbox"/> Shame/Guilt
	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial



## How you react to a trauma is unique to you.

You may be left wondering...

*Why me?*

*Why has this happened?*

*Will it happen again?*

*How will I go on?*

These thoughts are common.  
It may be helpful to:

- Acknowledge your feelings (acknowledgment ≠ acceptance)
- Be patient with your emotions
- Maintain positive coping

Your feelings may feel unpleasant. It is important to acknowledge them.

# Positive Coping Strategies

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- Drink water! Rest when possible.
  - Strive to eat fruits/vegetables.
  - Journal thoughts/emotions.
  - Exercise (go for a walk).
  - Practice relaxation techniques:
    - Do a hobby you enjoy.
  - Take long/deep breaths and notice sounds around you.
  - Listen to soothing music.
  - Engage with social supports.
  - Talk with someone you trust.
  - Create small to-do lists (AND reward yourself when you reach a goal).
  - Focus on the facts of what happened, rather than “what-ifs”.
  - Practice positive self-talk, rather than blaming.
  - Acknowledge positive memories.
  - Spend time in nature.
  - (Re)connect with your culture.
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## Contact Us

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Office hours are weekdays 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(Office closed on Statutory Holidays)

We are accessible by telephone, email and  
in-person appointments during office hours.

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