

## *How to get help*

Some people recover from a trauma with no or little additional support, especially if symptoms are mild. However, many people can develop chronic symptoms that can be long lasting. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the name given to describe these symptoms.

Psychological support can be very effective in helping people with PTSD. Therapies available on the NHS include Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) and trauma focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (tf-CBT).

It is important you visit your GP as soon after a trauma as possible. They can help to signpost you to the most appropriate early support or more specialist psychological services if symptoms persist.



# Understanding Trauma



Email: [info@emdrassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@emdrassociation.org.uk)

EMDR UK & Ireland  
[www.emdrassociation.org.uk](http://www.emdrassociation.org.uk)

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## *Useful websites:*

[www.emdrassociation.org.uk](http://www.emdrassociation.org.uk)

[www.traumaaiduk.org](http://www.traumaaiduk.org)

[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)

*A Guide for  
Adults and  
Adolescents*

## What is Psychological Trauma?

A psychological trauma can occur when you have experienced either a single event or long lasting or repeated events that are so overwhelming it affects your ability to cope or make sense of what happened.

Examples of traumatic events include:

- Serious accidents, i.e. road traffic collision
- Loss and grief
- Being told you have a life threatening (terminal) illness
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Natural or man made disasters
- Being taken hostage
- Bullying

Everyone has different ways of responding to events. What one individual finds traumatic another person may not find distressing.

## How You May React

Typical reactions that you may feel after a traumatic event include:

- Constantly thinking about the event.
- Images of the events keep coming into your mind
- Difficulty sleeping and/or nightmares
- Changes in how you feel emotionally, i.e. frightened, sad, anxious, angry
- Avoiding certain situations that remind you of the event
- Feeling numb, stunned, shocked or dazed and have difficulties connecting with life around you
- Denial that the event actually happened

## How You May Feel

It is very common to experience distress following a traumatic event. In most cases, the emotional reactions get better over the days and weeks that follow a trauma.

You may feel a wide range of emotions, including:

**Anger** – in relation to what happened to you and with other people involved.

**Guilty** – that you think you could or should have done something to prevent what happened (that you may feel you were to blame), or that you survived when others suffered or died.

**Frightened** – that the same event may happen again or that you feel you are unable to cope with your feelings, You may feel that you are not in control of what is going on in your life.

**Helpless** – that you were unable to do something about what happened.

**Sad** – that the trauma happened or that someone was injured or killed, especially if you knew them.

**Ashamed or Embarrassed** – by what had happened and that you feel you cannot tell anyone about it.

However, in some cases the effects of a trauma can be longer lasting and continue for months and even years after the event. Receiving the appropriate type of support can help you come to terms with the traumatic experience so that it does not continue to affect you for the rest of your life.

## What You Can Do

- At the beginning it is a good idea to allow yourself time to adjust and come to terms with what has happened. You may need to grieve for someone who died and process what has happened to you
- It can help to find out more details of what happened and where relevant, to talk through the event with other survivors and discuss the feelings you have
- When you are ready talking through the event with a supportive family member, friend, colleague or teacher can be helpful
- Try and get back into a routine with your sleep and eating
- It is not advisable to use drugs or alcohol as a way to cope, as this can make symptoms worse



**If you identify particular times in the day that are more distressing, it could help to try and distract yourself at these times. Ideas include:**

- Mindfulness and breathing techniques
- Listening to music
- Doing exercise
- Playing a game or doing a hobby
- Write down what you are thinking or feeling

**You don't have to suffer in silence.**