

Trauma Recovery

You've just been through a traumatic experience which has your emotions in an uproar and your mind in a spin. Right now, you are feeling the normal emotional and physical reactions that occur after a life-threatening situation has happened to you or someone you are close to. Just as a physical injury causes immediate pain and shock but lessens after a while, please know that you will recover, that **you will not always feel this way**, and that your brain needs some time to adjust to these events. Below you will find some suggestions to help you cope with your grief, your fears, your racing thoughts and to help you heal from your ordeal.

If possible, **give this handout to a loved one** and have them talk you through the following points:

- **Take care of you.** You need to recover physically. It's important that you get rest, eat well, continue regular exercise and be kind to yourself right now. If others offer to do things for you like run errands or fix meals, take them up on it. Take naps if you are having trouble sleeping at night. Do for yourself the things you would do for someone else who is suffering. Lie down with a cold cloth or a warm blanket, turn the phone off for a while, take a sick day, eat an ice cream cone or call your mother.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs.** They can increase your feelings of unreality and contribute to depression or anxiety.
- **Understand your feelings.** It is normal for your body to react with either anxiety or depression. Sometimes these feelings will take turns. Notice them. Accept them as your body's way of trying to care for you.
 - **Anxiety.** Breathe deeply when you notice you are anxious. Consciously try to slow your breathing down a bit. If you feel panicky, concentrate on something in your immediate environment. Count the slats in a nearby fence for example. Find a peaceful image or object you can use to soothe yourself when necessary. If your anxiety is debilitating, see a doctor for medical recommendations.
 - **Depression.** It is normal to feel down after the intensity of a trauma. If you feel depressed or apathetic, listen to some music which encourages or enlivens you. Think about people who give you hope. Be patient with yourself.
- **Talk about it.** It is important for you to be able to tell your story, not only right now but also in the days ahead. Suppressing your experiences can lead to bigger consequences down the road. Right now you should find a few sympathetic people who will listen to you talk. In the coming weeks you might benefit from a support group or a therapist to help you sort out your thoughts. It can also be helpful to start a journal, recording your trauma story as well as your thoughts and experiences in the coming days.
- **Reduce your stress.** Rethink your schedule to make it a little easier for the next week or two. Say no to a few things. Put off that big project. Cancel that babysitting gig. Postpone that math test.
- **Central Florida Helpline.** For crisis intervention support in Orlando, call **(407) 740-7477**, 24-hours a day. **211** may also be able to connect you with crisis services.