



The Florida Crisis Consortium  
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Department of Health.

## COMMON REACTIONS TO STRESS AND TIPS TO COPE

Reactions to a traumatic event are quite common among all people. While different people may react in different ways based on the event itself, individual's age, life experience, training, preparation, proximity to the event, the amount of time involved in the event, etc., many people have some level of the same natural reasons, which are related to survival, resiliency and recovery.

It is important to know that any reaction is likely a normal reaction even if it isn't the same reaction as everyone else. Some reactions will be mild while others may be so strong that they might cause difficulty in functioning or moving to recovery. Below are some signs and symptoms which are quite common and normal, followed by some tips and suggestions about what to do to help yourself and others around you get back on your normal path of life.

### *Physical reactions:*

Chills, sweating, stomach upset, headaches, rapid heartbeat, vomiting, dizziness, chest pain, heavy breathing, difficulty catching your breath, shaking, muscle tension and aches, or anything that is not part of your normal physical being.

### *Thinking reactions:*

Confusion, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, heightened startle response, blaming, disorientation, trouble making decisions, problems with numbers, nightmares, flashbacks, or any thinking difficulty or change from your normal thinking process.

*Emotional reactions:*

Fear, anger, guilt, panic, anxiety, aggression, crying spells, irritability, feeling overwhelmed or out of control, denial, depression, or any emotion which is not common for you.

*Behavioral reactions:*

Withdrawal, restlessness, changes in sleep, changes in appetite, increased use of alcohol, increased use of other substances, angry outbursts, difficulty expressing yourself, frustration, or any behavior which is different than your normal way of behaving.

*Spiritual reactions:*

Blaming God, feeling betrayed or abandoned by God, difficulty praying, loss of faith and hope, loss of sense of fairness, withdrawal from faith or faith community or any change in your personal spirituality.

THINGS TO DO OR NOT TO DO TO HELP GET BACK TO YOUR NORMAL YOU

Do something physical to get the blood flowing.

Avoid sugar, coffee, fried foods, alcohol and drink more water than usual.

Talk about your feelings, thoughts, frustrations with others.

Develop and try to keep a routine.

Avoid over use of medications, drugs, cigarettes etc.

Don't make any major decisions or changes. Give yourself time to get back in your right mind.

At the same time, understand you do have choices. Choose well.

Eat lighter, healthier meals and eat smaller portions but more often than normal.

Find some paper (especially a journal) and write whatever comes to mind especially right before you lay down to rest.

Reach out for help and graciously receive those who offer help. Realize that others are going through similar issues with you. You are not alone.

Rest, even if you can't sleep. Rest your bones.

Be confident that you will get through this and life will be good again.

Don't forget to breathe! Take a moment to be thankful! Take a chance to laugh!

Call for help if you need it or if you can't get back to your normal you after a week or so.

If you need help, call 211 and ask for your local mental health center or use one of the resources below:

### **Treatment Locators**

#### ***Mental Health Services Locator***

**(800) 789-2647 (English and Español)**

**(866) 889-2647 (TDD)**

**[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases)**

#### ***Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator***

**(800) 662-HELP (4357)**

**(Toll-Free, 24-Hour English and Español Treatment Referral Service)**

**(800) 487-4889 (TDD)**

**[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)**

### **Hotlines**

#### ***National Suicide Prevention Lifeline***

**(800) 273-TALK (8255)**

**(800) 799-4889 (TDD)**

#### ***SAMHSA National Helpline***

**(800) 662-HELP (4357) (English and Español)**

**(800) 487-4889 (TDD)**

#### ***Workplace Helpline***

**(800) WORKPLACE (967-5752)**

**[www.workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.htm](http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.htm)**