

Strategies to support people who have experienced a traumatic event

Here are some ideas and strategies you could try if you have experienced a traumatic event:

Self-care: Taking time to look after yourself can really help. Some examples of self-care include:

- Reading a book
- Eating healthily
- Listening to music
- Doing something you love
- Exploring the city
- Doing exercise.



Routine: Routine can help people to feel more secure. Try to develop a strong routine and stick to it if you can, and avoid isolating yourself from other people.

Talk to other people: Research suggests that avoiding talking about your experiences and feelings can make you feel worse. Try to talk to other people about your experiences if you can, especially people who have been through a similar thing to you.

Give yourself time: It is normal to feel a wide range of powerful feelings when you have been involved in a traumatic event like a war. Give yourself time and space to feel whatever you are feeling, and don't place pressure on yourself to feel a different way. Try to take one day at a time.

Notice and name how you are feeling: The way you feel after being involved in a traumatic event is completely individual. You might be feeling angry, anxious, sad, low or numb, a combination of these feelings, or something else. It can be very helpful to notice the thoughts and feelings you are having, to label your feelings, and to tell other people about them.

Avoid media about the event, if you can: It may be very difficult for you to avoid watching, reading or listening to media about what is happening, especially if you have family members who are still in Ukraine. Usually we would encourage people to limit the amount you watch, read or listen to, so try to do this if it is at all possible.

Grounding techniques: Grounding techniques are things that help you reconnect with the present moment and can be helpful when you are feeling very distressed. Here are some ideas:

- Square breathing: Breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds, hold for four seconds, and repeat
- Name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste
- Drawing around your hand
- Doing yoga exercises.

Sleep: It is very common to find it difficult to get to sleep and stay asleep following a traumatic event. Here are some ideas for improving your sleep:

- Try to get into a sleep routine, for example, going to bed at a certain time and getting up at the same time you usually would
- Avoid all screens for at least an hour before bedtime if you can
- Do a relaxing activity before trying to sleep, e.g. having a bath, reading a book
- Avoid talking about distressing things just before bed
- Avoid caffeine before bedtime
- Try listening to white noise as you go to sleep if you find unexpected sounds distressing
- Do a relaxation exercise if you wake up, such as the square breathing activity described in the 'grounding techniques' section
- Try not to worry if you can't get to sleep. It may help to have a break from trying to sleep and to do something else for a short time instead, such as going for a walk, making a hot drink, or reading a book.

Take care: You are more likely to have an accident or injury after being involved in a traumatic event. Take your time and avoid activities that could be dangerous if you are feeling particularly distressed.

Seek extra help: If you are finding things really difficult, tell a person who can help you to get some extra help. If you are a young person, this might be your parent, a person you are living with or an adult at school. If you are an adult, this might be a key worker or other member of staff working with you.