

# NORMAL REACTIONS TO ABNORMAL EVENTS

## Understanding Responses to Distressing Event

Distressing events can have a profound impact on individuals, affecting them in various ways. Everyone reacts differently to distressing events, and the following is a list of normal responses to abnormal situations. Recognizing these reactions can be the first step in coping and healing.



### Physical Reactions

- Exhaustion or Fatigue:** Feeling constantly tired, despite rest.
- Sleep Disturbances:** Difficulty sleeping or nightmares.
- Physical Ailments:** Headaches, stomach issues, or muscle tension.
- Changes in Appetite:** Eating significantly more or less than usual.



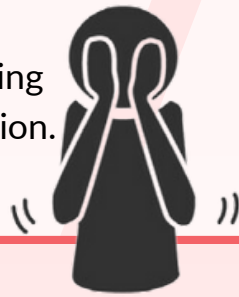
### Cognitive Reactions

- Difficulty Concentrating:** Challenges focusing on tasks or making decisions.
- Confusion:** Feeling disoriented or finding it hard to remember things.
- Preoccupation:** Constantly thinking about the disaster and its consequences.
- Questioning Beliefs:** Reevaluating personal, philosophical, or spiritual beliefs.



### Emotional Reactions

- Anxiety and Fear:** Persistent worry about safety, the future.
- Sadness or Grief:** Deep sorrow for losses experienced.
- Irritability or Anger:** Easily upset or angered, sometimes with little provocation.
- Feelings of Helplessness:** Overwhelming sense that one can't change the situation.



### Behavioural Reactions

- Withdrawal:** Pulling away from social interactions, wanting to be alone.
- Increased Substance Use:** Turning to alcohol, tobacco, or drugs for comfort.
- Change in Activity Levels:** Either hyperactivity or a significant reduction in activity.
- Avoidance:** Steering clear of places, people, or activities that are reminders of the trauma.

## When to Seek Professional Help?

While it's normal to experience a range of reactions following a distressing event, there are certain signs that indicate the need for professional assistance:

- Persistent Distress:** If intense emotional or physical symptoms persist for several weeks.
- Disruption in Daily Life:** When overwhelming feelings, thoughts, or physical symptoms significantly disrupt daily activities like work, relationships, or self-care.
- Harmful Thoughts or Behaviours:** If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, or if you're engaging in harmful behaviours like substance abuse as a coping mechanism.
- Difficulty Managing Trauma Reminders:** If you find yourself unable to manage the stress caused by reminders of the event, such as news reports.
- Emotional Numbness or Detachment:** If you feel emotionally numb, disconnected from others, or find that you're unable to experience pleasure in activities you once enjoyed.

*Remember that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.*



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