

Trauma: Tips for Coping

How people respond to trauma varies somewhat from person to person. Individual factors such as how you usually handle stressful situations and what kind of support you have both at work and in your personal life may influence both your short-term and long-term reactions.

Your reaction may be acute (immediate) or delayed. You may experience symptoms that are physical, emotional, or cognitive (involving your thinking ability).

Those who have experienced traumatic incident at their workplace report having a variety of responses. These may include:

FEARS: ...leaving their home or office building, returning to work, being in public, being re-victimized, fear that situation may occur again.

HYPERALERTNESS: ...easily startled; “jump” at loud/unexpected noises or when suddenly approached by others.

GUILT: ... “could have/should have” done something differently. If not there at the time: “I should have been there...”

ANGER: ...and rage. Could be a repressed emotion or apparent, and perhaps misdirected. Life has been disrupted...no longer feel safe or in control.

ISOLATION: ...am I doing worse than the others? Family and friends may not understand or want to continue to listen. Withdrawing and “toughing it out” is not healthy for very long.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT THESE ARE NORMAL RESPONSES TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT:

As you are able to talk about your experience and as you receive support from your co-workers and other people in your life, these responses will begin to diminish.