



West Sussex
Fire & Rescue
Service



Helpful hints

DO:

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep (your normal amount)
- Rest and relax, eat regularly and healthily
- Talk to friends and family about how you feel
- Try and reduce outside demands on you and limit any extra responsibility for the time being
- Take care at home or when driving/riding as accidents are more common after a traumatic or stressful event.

DON'T:

- Get embarrassed by your thoughts and feelings. They are normal reactions to a very stressful event. Everybody can react differently
- Bottle up your feelings
- Avoid people you trust
- Use alcohol to mask the thoughts and feelings.

Where to find more help

NHS

Contact your GP or NHS 111 about possible symptoms of anxiety, depression or post traumatic disorder.
[nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

MIND

0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm)

Samaritans

Call 116 123 (24/7)



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WS33374 07.2023

Witnessing Trauma

Information and support

You may find information within this leaflet helpful if you have witnessed or been involved in a traumatic incident



Common stress-related symptoms following a traumatic event

You may need to seek help if you have been experiencing any of the following reactions for several weeks and there is no sign of them improving:

- You have disturbed sleep or thoughts preventing you sleeping or dreams and nightmares
- You find you are easily startled and agitated
- You want to talk about what happened but don't feel you have anyone to share your feelings with
- You feel emotionally numb
- Your performance at work has suffered since the incident
- You experience tiredness, dizziness, shaking, feeling sick, rapid heartbeat, loss of memory
- Your relationships seem to be suffering since the incident
- Someone close to you tells you they are concerned about you
- You experience vivid images of what you saw and have intense emotional reactions to them
- You are worried about your alcohol or drug use since the incident
- You are experiencing overwhelming emotions that you feel unable to cope with or changes to your mood for no obvious reason.

If a child has witnessed or experienced a traumatic event it is normal for them to be stressed. They may be very upset or frightened however this shouldn't last beyond four weeks

If symptoms are being very upset continue beyond four weeks this could indicate Post Traumatic /Stress Disorder (PTSD) , it is important you seek help for your child.

Typical reactions to a traumatic event:

- Memories or images of the event unexpectedly coming into their mind
- Playing or drawing about the event time and time again
- Nightmares
- Not being able to concentrate
- Getting angry or upset more easily
- Not being able to sleep
- Feelings of it happening again
- Becoming clingy
- Stomach ache and or headaches
- Temporarily losing abilities (e.g feeding and toileting)
- Problems at school
- Avoiding anything that reminds them of the event that you feel unable to cope with or changes to your mood for no obvious reason.

How to help your child:

- Try and keep things as normal as possible such as usual routines and doing normal activities as much as you can as this will help your child feel safe more quickly
- Try to help your child understand what has happened by giving an honest explanation that is appropriate for their age. This may help reduce feelings of anger, confusion fear and sadness. It is helpful to correct misunderstandings that may, for example lead the child feeling they are to blame

- Talk to your child as and when they are ready. If this is difficult for you to do, ask a trusted adult such as a teacher or another family member to help
- Reassure the child that although bad things can happen, they don't need to be scared all the time
- In the event of a death, particularly a traumatic one, it can be difficult to accept the reality of what happened. Be patient, simple and honest in response to questions about death.

What to look for:

- Children might show that they think differently either about themselves or other people

They may:

- Show less trust in other people
- Experience overwhelming feelings in the form of shame, sadness and fear
- Blame themselves or show low self-esteem
- They are avoiding situations that they fear could increase their emotional response
- Describe thinking they are the bad person or talk about thoughts of deserving bad things to happen to them.

What to do:

- If you have any concerns about your child , it is important to seek help via your GP. There are some very effective treatments for children and young people experiencing the effects of trauma.