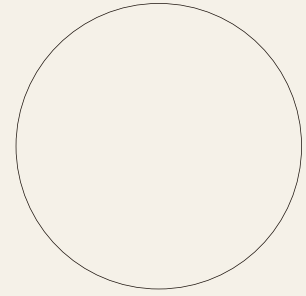


COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA: ADULTS



info@yourhighestplace.com | 423-710-9922 | www.yourhighestplace.com

Dr. Natatie Pickering

<i>Behavioral</i>	<i>Affective (Emotional)</i>	<i>Somatic (Physical)</i>
Avoidance:	Emotionally numb / shut down	Nightmares
-using substances (alcohol, medications, etc.) to numb, not think or feel	Shock	Intrusive thoughts (these are different)
-wanting to leave or escape familiar places, including site of incident	Fearfulness / Anxiety	Stomach / GI issues
-working more to not think about what happened	Fear of incident happening again	Heart pounding
Not participating in typical fun activities or hobbies	More agitated	Chest pain
Less productive	Frustration	Hard to get breath/ shortness of breath
Losing or misplacing things more frequently	Overwhelmed (more easily), lower "window of tolerance"	Appetite loss
Startling easily	Anger (at self, others, God)	Headaches
Hyper-alert to environment (looking over shoulder)	Resentment	Sore muscles
Tearful	Sadness	Tense muscles
Slowed down	Mood swings	Dry mouth and throat
Pacing	Helplessness	Increased need to urinate
Aimlessness (e.g wandering)	Hopelessness	Teeth grinding
Risky or self-destructive behavior	Guilt	Weight change (gain or loss)
	Shame	Fatigue, exhaustion
	Loss of sense of humor	Change in sexual desire, functioning

<i>Interpersonal (Relationships)</i>	<i>Cognitive (Thoughts)</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>
Irritability	Confusion	Feeling that God/Higher Power is punishing you
Insensitivity	Feeling disoriented “lost”	
Loss of interest in others	Poor concentration	Feeling that God/HP doesn’t or can’t love you
Withdrawn/isolating	Poor decision-making	
Aggressive/violent	Difficulty prioritizing	Feeling that God/HP is distant
Critical of others	Poor memory	Disappointment with God/HP
Avoid intimacy/connection	Poor attention (hard to retain information)	Anger at God/HP
Insecure	Preoccupied with trauma memories	Questioning long-held beliefs
Clingy	Increase in closed thinking	
Suspicious	Increase in rigid, absolute thinking (e.g. I will never...; they always..., No one...)	
Feelings hurt easily (highly sensitive)	Critical and negative judgment to self (e.g. I’m such a failure...; I can’t...;)	
Startling easily	Hindsight bias thinking (e.g. If only...; why didn’t...)	
Hyper-alert to environment (looking over shoulder)	Flashbacks/intrusive thoughts	
Tearful		
Slowed down		
Pacing		
Aimlessness (e.g wandering)		
Risky self-destructive behavior		

Our response to traumatic situations is unique. The same people who experienced the same traumatic incident will have different responses. Your response may not be the same as someone else’s. Over time, as you work through your reactions and how the trauma impacted you, it is likely that you will be stronger in one or more ways than you were before the traumatic incident. Even after the memories start to fade and eventually go away and you recover function in these areas listed, don’t be surprised by things or moments that may “trigger” any of the reactions listed here. If your symptoms become very intense and persist over a long period of time, or if they start interfering with work, relationships, your day-to-day, consider connecting with a counselor who specializes in trauma.

WAYS TO COPE AFTER A TRAUMA

When we have experienced trauma, our stress “chemicals” and stress response is high. Sometimes our normal coping strategies may not be enough. Take some time to reflect on how you are coping. Use the provided list of common reactions. Ask someone who knows you well. Consider what you might do differently in order to strengthen your coping “toolkit”. Ask yourself:

- How have I coped with severe stress at other times in my life?
- What is working for me right now? What might I need to change during this high stress time?
- Are there coping strategies to use again that worked for me before?
- Are there new coping strategies I might try?
- Who can I talk to about this?

Coping Strategies to Try

Relax. Rest.

Spend more time in your safest, most familiar, comfortable environment.

Listen to music that is comforting to you.

If faith is a resource for you, use those resources- prayer, music, Scripture reading.

Get more sleep than you normally need.

Be intentional in spending time with supportive, helpful, understanding others.

Check your nutrition (avoid sugar)

Exercise.

Talk about what happened (to God if this is part of your personal toolkit or to safe trusted others)

Write about what happened (journal, letter to __, phone call)

Laugh when you can

Cry if you can.

Set small goals. Don't take on big projects if you can help it.

Keep routine as much as possible.

Educate yourself about trauma responses.

Look for perspective, meaning in the event.

Ask for help.

Let others help you

Avoid

Making major decisions

Drinking alcohol

Drinking caffeinated drinks

Using sedating drugs unless prescribed by an MD

Talking publicly about sensitive details soon after the trauma

Setting up active travel, speaking schedule

Making broad generalizations about the meaning of what happened.

Bottling it up

info@yourhighestplace.com | 423-710-9922 | www.yourhighestplace.com

Dr. Natalie Pickering