



## COPING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

If you have been affected by recent events in Tunisia you may find this leaflet helpful. It explains how you might feel in the days and months ahead, and aims to help you understand what is happening after such an experience and take control.

**Immediate feelings and emotions you may experience include:**

- **Fear and helplessness**
- **Shock and denial**
- **Sadness, loss and loneliness**
- **Guilt** - for having survived or not being injured
- **Shame**
  - for feeling helpless, emotional or in need of others
  - for feeling like you didn't react as you would have wished

- **Anger**
  - at what has happened and at whatever caused it or allowed it to happen
  - at the perceived lack of proper understanding from others
- **Memories**
  - of people who have been injured or who have died
  - of previous traumatic experiences
- **Disappointment**
  - for all the plans that will now never be fulfilled

It is natural to have some or all of these feelings, or even different feelings, and you may experience some more strongly than others.

Acceptance of the situation is only possible by allowing these feelings to come out. Stopping such feelings may lead to other and possibly more complicated problems.

These immediate feelings may gradually fade over time, and others take their place.

## Physical and Mental Reactions

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, loss of memory, poor concentration and palpitations as well as feeling physically unwell (for example, headaches, upset stomach, neck and back aches.)

If you are reluctant to talk about the event, you may find yourself wanting to avoid people or places that remind you of what happened. Be aware of increased alcohol and medication intake due to extra stress.

You may find that your relationships with family and friends are also affected by what happened.

## What You Can Do

The following advice can make the events and your feelings about them easier to bear:

- **Gradual Adjustment:** Recognise it may take some time before you feel anything, at first you may feel numb and the incident may seem unreal.
- **Activity:** Everyone reacts differently. Recognise it may

take some time before you feel anything. At first you may feel numb and the incident may seem unreal or you may feel very distressed. Over time, with support from family and friends, these feelings may improve

- **Support:** Helping others may give you some relief, but recognise you may also need help and support.
- **Privacy:** It can be a relief to receive other people's physical and emotional support. Try not to reject it. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can be helpful.

### Some Do's and Don'ts

#### Don't

- bottle up your feelings
- avoid talking about what happened
- expect just to get over it. Your feelings may stay with you for a long time
- forget that others will be experiencing similar feelings to you

#### Do

- express your emotions
- let your children talk to you and others
- about their emotions and express themselves
- take every opportunity to talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling
- take good care of yourself physically, including eating well and exercising regularly
- take time to sleep, rest, reflect and be with people who can support you
- try to keep your life as normal as possible
- remember that you are the same person that you were before the incident
- be more careful around the home and drive more carefully - accidents are more common after a stressful event
- remember that if you suffer too much or too long, help is available

#### When to Find Help

- If you feel you don't have anyone to share your feelings with

- If you are experiencing overwhelming emotions that feel unable to cope with
- If, after four weeks, you continue to feel numb, continue to experience intrusive thoughts or have to keep active in order to not think about the event. If you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep
- If your relationships seem to be suffering badly
- If you are worried about your alcohol or drug use
- If your work performance suffers

#### Contact

Contact your GP who can provide more support or if your GP surgery is closed and you feel you can't wait until it re-opens call **NHS 24** [free](#) on **111**