Common Responses to Traumatic Events

The recent school shooting has affected the lives of many people – those directly impacted and even those indirectly impacted. Although responses to the event may differ, most people will experience some common reactions. These signs and symptoms may begin immediately or you may feel fine for days or even weeks and then suddenly be hit with a reaction. Although it may seem strange, it is very normal for people to experience emotional “aftershocks” following a traumatic event. Some common responses are:

**Physical Reactions**
- Insomnia
- Fatigue, hyperactivity or “nervous energy”
- Pain in the neck or back
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations or pains in the chest
- Dizzy spells
- Appetite changes

**Emotional Reactions**
- Flashbacks or “reliving” the event
- Excessive jumpiness or tendency to be startled
- Irritability
- Anger
- Feelings of anxiety or helplessness
- Feeling vulnerable

Usually, the signs and symptoms of trauma will lessen with time. If you are concerned about your reaction, note the specific symptoms that worry you. For each symptom, note the:
- **Duration**—Normally, trauma reactions will grow less intense and disappear within a few weeks.
- **Intensity**—If the reaction interferes with your ability to carry on your life normally, you may want to seek help.

**Tips for Coping After a Traumatic Event**

As you are experiencing various emotions resulting from a traumatic event, below are suggestions that may help:
- Physical exercise along with relaxation may help relieve the physical stress.
- Talk to people; talk is the most healing medicine.
- Spend time with others. Resist the tendency to isolate.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through sleepless times.
- Get plenty of rest and eat regular meals, even if you don’t feel like it.
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. They will decrease over time and become less painful.
Resources Are Available
Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.foh4You.com. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

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