

This is a **brief information sheet** aimed at anyone exposed to a traumatic incident. The emotional effects will be felt by witnesses, bereaved families, friends, rescue workers, health care workers, and the general public. If you witnessed or lost someone in a recent incident you are most likely to feel distressed by it. Reactions to the event are likely to be strongest in those closest to the incident, who directly witnessed the aftermath, and who were involved in the immediate incident and care.

Common Reactions to Traumatic Events

The following responses are normal and to be expected in the first few weeks:

- Emotional reactions such as feeling afraid, sad, horrified, helpless, overwhelmed, angry, confused, numb or disorientated
- Having distressing thoughts and images of the incident
- Nightmares
- Disturbed sleep or insomnia
- Feeling anxious
- Low mood

These responses are a normal part of recovery and are the mind's mechanisms for trying to make sense and come to terms with what has happened. They should subside over time.

What Can People Do to Cope?

- The most helpful way to cope with an event like this is to be with people you feel close to and normally spend time with.
- If it helps, talk to someone you feel comfortable with (friends, family, co-workers) about how you are feeling.
- Talk at your own pace and as much as you feel is useful.
- Be willing to listen to others who may need to talk about how they feel.
- Take time to grieve and cry if you need to.
- Ask for emotional and practical support from friends, family members, your community or religious centre.
- Try to return to everyday routines and habits. They can be comforting, when things feel overwhelming. Look after yourself: eat and sleep well, exercise and relax.
- Try to spend some time doing something that feels good and that you enjoy.
- Try to be kind to yourself.

If you would like help:

please call Lambeth Talking Therapies on 0203 228 6747 or search 'Lambeth Talking Therapies', register online and then call, and give the reference 'Streatham incident'.

Or speak to your GP.

How Can Children Be Helped to Cope?

- Let them know that you understand their feelings
- Give them the opportunity to talk, if and when they want to
- Respect their pace. Help them understand what happened by explaining the main details truthfully, if they ask
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Keep to usual routines
- Keep them from seeing too many frightening pictures

When Should a Person Seek More Help?

In the early stages, psychological professional help is **not** usually necessary. Many people recover naturally from these events. However, some people may need additional support to help them cope. For example, people who have had other traumatic events happen to them and people with previous mental health difficulties may be more at risk.

It is recommended that you seek professional support if a month after the event you are still experiencing the following difficulties:

- Feeling upset and fearful
- Finding it difficult to stop thinking about the incident
- Having nightmares
- Feeling more irritable
- Feeling more jumpy
- Struggling to work or look after your home and family
- Starting to have relationship difficulties
- Using drugs or drinking alcohol more than usual
- Acting very differently to before the trauma
- Struggling to enjoy life
- Feeling emotionally numb

What Kind of Help is Available?

Psychological interventions for trauma reactions can vary but generally their aim is to enable people to improve coping and address difficult feelings.

Medications are not the first line of treatment but can at times be recommended and can be helpful in treating some symptoms.

We are here to help so please do call.

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