

Social work services

A social worker is available for you and your family during your admission. Social workers can provide support and someone to talk to, and can help you with the practical issues that can arise. They can link you into the resources and services needed after discharge.

Your social worker's contact details are overleaf.

What is Trauma?

An event such as a car accident or assault can result in a wide range of responses. You may experience these kinds of responses immediately, or after some time has passed.

Physical reactions:

You may have aches and pains, sudden sweating and heart palpitations. You might find you are easily startled. You may experience changes in sleeping and eating patterns.

Feelings:

You may feel shock, disbelief, anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, guilt and shame. You may feel helpless, panicked or out of control. It's common to experience mood swings, to be hyper-alert or even detached and numb.

Thoughts:

You may have recurring thoughts, dreams and flashbacks. You might have trouble concentrating, remembering things or making decisions.

All these are normal reactions to abnormal events. Many people are surprised when reactions to trauma last longer than they expect. It can take time to understand what's happening and work through it.

Coping with trauma

There is no one way to cope with trauma. Everyone has their own way of recovering.

The key for most people is to connect with others – to ask for help, support and understanding and to take opportunities to talk. It's common to worry about burdening others with your problems but it's important to remember there are people who want to help.

Things that might help include:

- Reassure yourself that the traumatic event is over and that you are safe.
- Give yourself permission to feel sad, angry or scared – these feelings are normal.
- Understand that reactions such as recurring thoughts, dreams and flashbacks are normal. You don't need to fight them – they will ease up over time.
- Express your thoughts and feelings to the people around you or write them down.
- Be kind to yourself
- Don't be afraid to seek help: counselling is available and can help you adjust.

Sometimes friends and family may expect you to 'get over it' before you're ready or tell you what you must do to feel better. If that happens, it's okay to let people know that you'll get over it in your own time and in your own way. Make sure to let them know you appreciate them trying to help.

Suggestions for family and friends

When you learn that someone close to you has been through a traumatic event, you may yourself go through the range of feelings described above. As time passes, it can be hard to see a loved one go through all the reactions a traumatic experience can provoke.

There may be times when your offers of help are refused. Respect their decision, and if you feel the time is right, you can try again later. If you feel like you don't know what to say or do, be honest – 'I don't know what to say. Is there something I can do to help?'

It's okay to feel frustrated and impatient at times. It's important to take time to care for yourself and to talk to someone about what you're going through.

Trauma Counselling

If your reactions are hard for you to cope with or last longer than six weeks or so, it may be time to seek professional help.

Counselling can help you to express and make sense of your feelings. It can also help you to manage your reactions. It can be a great comfort and support during a difficult time.

Your social worker can assist with linking into counselling services. Your GP or TAC case manager (if relevant) can also help you find the right counselling service.

Lifeline

24 hour telephone crisis support service

Call 131 114 or visit <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

Road Trauma Support Service

Call 1300 367 797 to discuss counselling services.

<http://www.rtssv.org.au/>

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

People who have been bereaved can call the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement for information and referral. Call 1300 664 786 (toll free) or visit www.grief.org.au

More information

Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Health

The 'publications' section has helpful information sheets.

<http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/index.html>

Contact

Practitioner / Patient notes

.....
Social worker

9342 7440