

Coping with trauma

There are a number of ways you can help look after yourself after a traumatic event or situation:

Emotional coping:

Recognise that you have been through a distressing experience and give yourself permission to be impacted by it, without judging yourself for feeling upset.

Remind yourself that you are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

Avoid using alcohol or other drugs to cope with your experiences.

Share your experiences with trusted others when opportunities arise. This may feel uncomfortable at times but talking to people you feel safe with rather than bottling up your feelings can be helpful.

Avoid making any major decisions or life changes.

Social support:

Let your friends and family know your needs. Help them to help you by letting them know when you are tired, need time out, or need a chance to talk or just be with someone.

If the traumatic event has impacted the community (e.g. natural disaster), find ways to connect to and support the wider community to create positive healing experiences for yourself and those around you.

Find others who have been through similar experiences, such as through a local support group.

Seek out professional support if needed, including from a psychologist.

Re-establishing safety:

Try to maintain a normal routine. Keep busy and structure your day. Remember that regular exercise is important but do allow yourself time to rest if you are tired.

Maintain a regular sleep schedule and be mindful of avoiding caffeine or alcohol, especially later in the day.

Keep regular meals and maintain a healthy and balanced diet where possible.

Make time to practise relaxation. Use a formal technique such as progressive muscle relaxation, or just make time to absorb yourself in a relaxing activity such as gardening, cooking, art making, or listening to music. This will help your body and mind to re-establish a sense of safety.

Use grounding techniques such as guided breathing exercises, or the five-senses grounding technique (name five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can touch, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste).