

Mental coping in a crisis situation

When you face a sudden crisis, be compassionate to yourself and your reactions. Remember that your feelings are normal and appropriate in an exceptional situation.

Ways to help yourself cope in a crisis situation

- Try to remember the positive methods you have used to cope in difficult situations in the past. Gently remind yourself that you will make it through the current situation as well.
- Talk about what happened to you with other people. Tell them how you felt and what you were thinking both during the traumatic event and afterwards. Talking about the experience helps you come to terms with it.
- Do not keep scary or strange feelings inside but let them out. Crying helps.
- Listen to your close friends and family to see how they feel. They may have been affected too.
- Prioritise the most important needs, such as eating and sleeping. If at all possible, continue working or studying and hold on to old routines. At work or at school, talk about your traumatic experience to your supervisor, colleagues or teachers for them to understand you better.
- Sometimes it is easier to express your feelings through action instead of talking. Draw, paint, write, play or exercise.
- Exercise works wonders, since it releases tension. A brisk walk some hours before going to bed may help you fall asleep.
- Shock impacts the alertness of the body, which may cause the feeling of hunger to disappear. So remember to eat.
- Avoid excessive amounts of alcohol and sedatives.

Crisis reactions caused by exceptional situations change and become easier over time. Reacting and going through the event in your mind or talking about it helps you come to terms with your experience. Gradually you will get over the traumatic event and notice that life goes on, although perhaps slightly different than before.

When do you need help coping with crisis reactions?

You may need help even a long time after the traumatic event.

Seek professional assistance if

- You experience constant anxiety, depression or stress.
- You constantly suffer from insomnia or sleep restlessly.
- You find it hard to focus.
- You find it hard to work or study or take care of the basics of everyday life.
- You have unexplained physical symptoms.
- You have no one to talk to.
- Your relationships suffer and you detach yourself.
- You feel you behave erratically or easily lose your temper.
- You have had mental health issues or medication before the traumatic event and you feel that you need help.
- You have lost your will to live.
- You are using too much drugs, alcohol or other substances.
- You have ideas of self-harm or suspect that you could harm others.

You can find professional assistance through a health centre, occupational health care or student welfare services.