BEEN THROUGH SOMETHING SCARY OR UPSETTING?

If you've experienced a traumatic event (on patrol, at training, or even outside surf life saving), it's normal to feel "not yourself" afterwards. Everyone responds differently — and there's no "right" way to react. What matters is getting support and using a few simple strategies so you don't have to carry it alone.

WHAT YOU MIGHT BE FEELING (ALL NORMAL)

After a traumatic incident, people often feel things like fear, helplessness, anger, guilt, sadness, shame, relief, or hope — sometimes all in the same day. You might also notice your body is on high alert (tight chest, shaky, nauseous, racing thoughts), or you might feel numb and flat. Both can be part of the brain's stress response.

IF YOU NEED HELP RIGHT NOW

In case you feel unsafe, overwhelmed, or like you can't get through the moment, contact support immediately: **Lifeline 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14.**

ARE YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OR CRISIS? **CALL 000**

Contact us anytime:
memberwelfare@lifesaving.com.au

Surf Life Saving Queensland

HELPFUL THINGS YOU CAN DO IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS

A few practical actions can genuinely help recovery:

- **Give yourself time** — healing isn't instant, and you don't need to "move on" quickly.
- **Be kind to yourself** — trauma reactions are natural; talk to yourself like you would a mate.
- **Talk to someone you trust** — a friend, parent, youth leader, coach, or someone in your patrol or training group.
- **Try grounding** — focus on what's around you to bring your body back to "safe" (e.g., name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear).
- **Keep a routine** — regular wake-up time, meals, movement, and getting outside can help your nervous system settle.
- **Limit triggers early** — it can help to step back from news/social media or places that bring it all back for a little while.
- **Look after your body** — rest, eat well, move gently, and avoid using alcohol/drugs to cope.
- **Express it your way** — journalling, music, art, gym, a walk… whatever helps you process without forcing the words.

SIGNS YOU MIGHT NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

It's a good idea to reach out if:

- You feel like you can't handle the intensity of your feelings or physical sensations.
- You find yourself bursting into tears for a prolonged time.
- Things feel like they're getting worse, not better.
- You're having distressing thoughts or ongoing emotional/physical symptoms.
- Your sleep is broken.
- You're using more alcohol or drugs than usual.
- It's impacting your relationships or how you're functioning day to day.

HOW SLSQ CAN SUPPORT YOU

Surf Life Saving Queensland can help explain how to get in touch with a psychologist or mental health expert.

SLSQ can also connect you with a Peer Support Officer — this is a trained surf life saving member (not a counsellor) who understands the culture and what incidents can feel like, and can provide a safe, confidential check-in, practical support, and help you link into the right professional services if you need more than a chat.

You can email: **memberwelfare@lifesaving.com.au** and a team member will get back to you with available options.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TALK TO A PSYCHOLOGIST OR MENTAL HEALTH EXPERT?

Talking to a mental health expert is usually a lot more practical (and less intense) than people expect. It's a confidential, judgement-free chat where you can explain what happened and what you've noticed since — thoughts, feelings, sleep, stress, or anything that's been sticking around. You won't be forced to share details you're not ready for; the clinician will go at your pace, help you make sense of your reactions, and teach simple tools to calm your body and mind (especially if you're feeling on edge or replaying the event). You'll also work out a plan for the next few days and weeks — like how to handle triggers, get back into routine, and know when extra support is needed.