

## Other feelings you may experience:

### Physical

- Chills
- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Elevated blood pressure
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Grinding teeth
- Headaches
- Muscle tremors
- Nausea
- Pain
- Profuse sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Twitches
- Weakness

### Mental

- Blaming someone
- Change in alertness
- Confusion
- Hyper-vigilance
- Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
- Intrusive images
- Memory problems
- Nightmares
- Poor abstract thinking
- Poor attention
- Poor concentration
- Poor decision-making
- Poor problem solving

### Emotional

- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Apprehension
- Denial
- Depression
- Emotional shock
- Fear
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Grief
- Guilt
- Inappropriate emotional response
- Irritability
- Loss of emotional control

### Behavioural

- Increased alcohol consumption
- Antisocial acts
- Change in activity
- Change in communication
- Change in sexual functioning
- Change in speech pattern
- Emotional outbursts
- Inability to rest
- Change in appetite
- Pacing
- Startle reflex intensified
- Suspicious
- Social withdrawal

## When to get further help

Following a potentially traumatic event the majority of people will recover well.

However, if symptoms persist for more than a month, it may be necessary to seek professional psychological support.

### You should seek help if:

- You feel that you cannot handle your intense feelings or physical sensations.
- The effects which followed the incident are getting worse, not better.
- You continue to experience distressing thoughts, or physical or emotional symptoms.
- You continue to have nightmares or your sleep continues to be affected.
- You are using increased amounts of alcohol or drugs.
- Your responses are hurting your relationships with other people.



**SURF LIFE SAVING  
QUEENSLAND**

Surf Life Saving Queensland are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of our members.

If you need further assistance, please contact the Member Welfare Officer on **07 3846 8023**, or via [peersupport@lifesaving.com.au](mailto:peersupport@lifesaving.com.au).



**SURF LIFE SAVING  
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# TRAUMATIC EVENT GUIDELINES



## Objectives

Surf Life Saving Queensland would like to share the following information, which may assist members in dealing with a traumatic event.

## What to expect

Immediately after a traumatic event it is normal to experience feelings of shock, numbness and denial. You may feel dazed and unable to accept that it has happened. Over a period of hours and days the initial disbelief will gradually fade. Reactions to trauma differ between individuals and it is normal to experience a range of reactions as you come to terms with the incident.

## Possible feelings

You may feel:

**Fear:** that the same thing will happen again.

**Helplessness:** lack of control and a sense of being overwhelmed and vulnerable.

**Anger:** about the situation, about other's actions or the result.

**Guilt:** feeling as though you could have done more, would have prevented the incident or that you survived when others did not.

**Sadness:** particularly if people were killed or injured.

**Ashamed or embarrassed:** about your reaction or the lack of control over your feelings, especially if you need to ask for help.

**Relieved:** that the incident is over and the danger has gone.

**Hopeful:** that life will return to normal. People can feel positivity soon after trauma and that is ok.

## How can you help yourself

### Give yourself time

It may take weeks or months to come to terms with what happened and learn to adjust to it.

Everyone has their own unique response to trauma. Be patient with yourself and your response to what happened.

### Talk to someone

Talking about how you feel with a trusted person may be a relief. You don't need to talk about the event itself to describe how you are feeling right now.

### Tell yourself that you are safe

It can be helpful to tell yourself that the incident is over and you are ok now. It can be hard to think in this way during a flashback, so it could help to write down or record some useful phrases at a time when you're feeling better.

### Try grounding techniques

This can keep you connected to the present and help you cope with flashbacks or intrusive thoughts. For example, describe your surroundings out loud or focus on planting your feet firmly on the ground and notice the way this feels.

### Take care

Be more careful than usual, for example when cooking, driving or using machinery. Following a major incident, you may be more vulnerable to accidents and physical illness.

### Resume a normal routine

A normal routine makes you feel more secure. Stick to set times for waking up and going to bed and try to continue with your usual daily activities as best you can. Don't throw yourself into work or activities in attempt to avoid painful thoughts or memories.

## Look after yourself

Look after yourself by getting plenty of rest (even if you can't sleep), regular exercise and by eating regular, well balanced meals. Physical and mental health are closely linked, so taking care of one will help the other. Cut back on tea, coffee, chocolate, soft drinks, and cigarettes. Your body is already 'hyped up' enough and these substances will only add to this. Try to avoid using drugs or alcohol to cope, as they can lead to more problems in the long term.

## Avoid making big decisions

Avoid making any major life decisions, such as moving house or changing jobs, in the period following the trauma. On the other hand, make as many smaller daily decisions as possible, like what you want to eat or what film you'd like to see. This helps to re-establish feelings of control over your life.

## Reflecting on what has occurred

A traumatic event can have an impact on how you see the world, your life, your goals and your relationships. Giving yourself time to re-evaluate what you think and talking to others about it may help.

