



Just like your body knows how to heal a cut, your brain knows how to process trauma. Traumatizing experiences shake the foundations of our beliefs about safety, and shatter our assumptions of trust.

PLEASE, REMEMBER...

Trauma is relative as different people will react differently to similar events. One person may perceive an event to be traumatic that another may not.

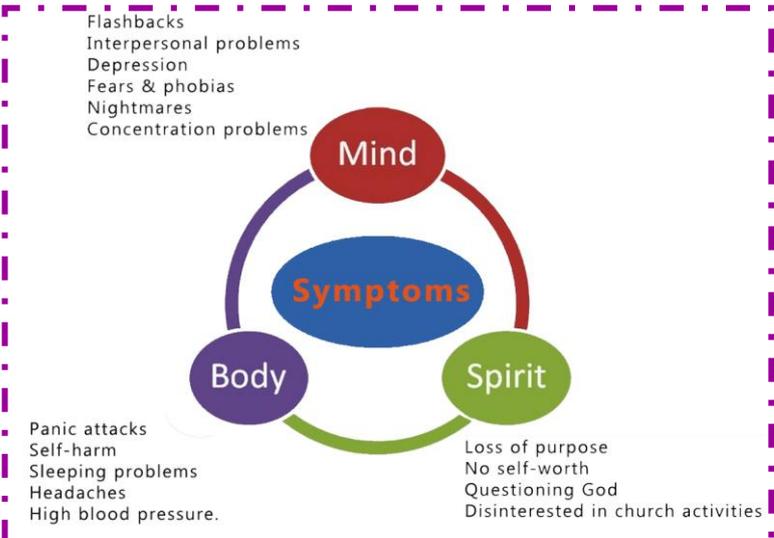
- Because trauma depends on;**
- the severity of the event
 - the individual's personal history (which may not even be recalled)
 - the larger meaning the event represents for the individual (which may not be evident)
 - coping skills, values and beliefs held by the individual (some of which may have never been identified)
 - the reactions and support from family, friends, and/or professionals

Is there a difference between a crisis and trauma? The simple answer is yes. A Crisis is an emotionally significant event or unstable state of affairs (business crisis), where trauma is a psychological or emotional event that has a life threatening possibility to it.

Crisis vs. Trauma?	
A CRISIS	A TRAUMA
We may choose a path that takes us to crisis (getting divorced).	No-one chooses to experience a trauma – there is no choice in trauma.
A crisis may be a growth opportunity or a damaging experience.	A trauma is more than likely to be a damaging experience to a person's mental or social life – it involves terror and danger.
A crisis is a response to a distressing event with an 'expected' range of life experiences – (getting retrenched might be a crisis, it is not an unusual thing to happen).	A trauma is a response to a distressing event that is outside the range of 'expected' life experiences because it always implies the threat of death or physical injury.

Symptoms

After a traumatic experience, a person may re-experience the trauma mentally and physically through our senses of Sight, Hear, Taste, Touch and Smell. Re-experiencing symptoms are a sign that the body and mind are actively struggling to cope with the traumatic experience. Emotional triggers and cues act as reminders of the trauma, and can cause anxiety and other associated emotions. Often the person can be completely unaware of what these triggers are.



How Do I Know When to Get Help?

Trauma can affect anyone at any age. The effects can be mild or severe, creating extreme psychological issues. Any symptoms of trauma should be taken seriously. In some cases however, the effects of trauma can manifest months and even years after the event, so in actuality, it can be difficult to recognize the symptoms. Often people feel they are weak for needing help, especially when they compare themselves to others who may have endured the same traumatic experience. But it is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to trauma and there is no guideline as to how and what someone should feel. What we do know is that the sooner you deal with the symptoms of trauma, the better chance you have for a full recovery and to be free of the effects of these events. If left unresolved, emotional trauma can affect your daily choices and functioning and ultimately, it can manifest into serious psychological disorders with lasting effects (e.g PTSD). Just as we need help to heal the physical effects of trauma, we also need help to heal the emotional wounds. Counselling offers a safe and supportive environment to work through these issues.



What Can You Do?

Security – After trauma, the most basic of human need must be met. It's critical to restore your loved one to a place where he or she will be safe.

Nutrition – Make sure your loved one eats healthy foods, regular meals, and drinks plenty of water. They may try to resist wanting to eat, but hydration and appetite is very important during times of stress. It's also a good idea to avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol during this time.

Rest & Relaxation– Although it may be resisted by the individual, encourage him or her to rest. Without adequate sleep, the body can't rejuvenate or overcome the effects of the trauma and stress. Have your loved one lie in a quiet and darkened room. Even if he or she is unable to sleep through the night at first, just resting without interruption will help to restore calm. Eventually, sleep should come, and along with it, the body's restorative powers can begin. Whatever it is that you know your loved one generally finds enjoyment doing, make it a point to encourage this kind of activity. Better yet, join in with your loved one.

Exercise – Sometimes the last thing a person who has experienced trauma wants to do is engage in physical exercise, but this is really a very good way to help them get rid of the negative effects of stress. You can help by encouraging them to participate in a sport or activity you know they enjoy, or join in a game with the family. You may even disguise it as exercise by making it a family effort. It isn't how much exercise the person does, but the fact that they do it. Exercise will also help your loved one get back into the rhythm of normal daily life.

Listen and Talk – It may be helpful for your loved one to talk about what occurred, and, with your encouragement, bring up ways he or she was able to deal with traumatic events in the past. We are all a product of our cumulative experiences and ways we dealt with things in the past may prove helpful now. You can mention your own past dealings with stress and trauma and what worked for you. But don't be judgmental and force your ideas on your loved one. Listen to what he or she has to say, including allowing their pent-up emotions to release.

Give Assurance – When your loved one expresses or shows signs of being depressed, guilty, or angry, he or she needs your assurance that this is perfectly normal, given what transpired. Just hearing your reassurance will help, even if it's quickly dismissed. Be consistent in offering assurance, as it may take some time to sink in.

Connect with Others – Your loved one can most likely benefit by connecting with other survivors of trauma and traumatic events. You can help by finding such a group and going with your loved one to the meeting. Your loved one will be able to see and hear that others have and are experiencing the same types of difficulties and that will give them some measure of comfort that they are not alone.

Prayer and Meditation – The spiritual needs of your loved one are also important. Take the lead by initiating family prayers or going to your church or place of worship, listening to mass or religious service on the radio or watching it on TV. Seek your loved one's pastor or church leader to help.

Seek professional help – There may be a time when your loved one will need to seek the help of a professional, especially when they are still experiencing the trauma weeks later. With your love one, make an appointment and assist where possible.
