

You have experienced an upsetting event: you have lost someone close to you, been involved in an accident yourself, you are injured or have been subject to violence. You have witnessed a shocking situation or been involved in a threatening situation. Someone close to you has committed suicide or attempted it.

After a shocking experience it is healthy and normal to react. Strong emotions may also arise from thoughts of what might have happened.

REACTIONS DURING THE FIRST DAYS

- Everything feels unreal, nightmarish.
- It is difficult for you to understand and accept what has happened.
- You may suffer from headache, feel sick or cold, sweat or have tense muscles.
- You are completely numb or your emotions come out for example in tears. You may feel guilt, sadness or a sense of relief.
- You find it difficult to fall asleep or your sleep is broken.
- The event keeps coming back to your thoughts.
- You recognise smells and sounds, see details of the incident.
- You are afraid that the same horror is repeated, that you are 'going mad' or left alone.
- You feel that you must understand what has happened, for example know the reason or find out who is guilty.

FEELINGS DURING THE FIRST WEEKS

- You keep living through the events again and again.
- You feel anxious and restless.
- You are irritable and angry, your nerves are on edge and you may lose your temper even for small reasons.
- You are distressed, depressed or apathetic.
- Your feelings are contradictory: you are relieved for having survived but you feel guilty because you were luckier than others.
- You become upset easily and may misinterpret other people.
- You have difficulties in concentrating and remembering.

► Some people react more strongly than others in the same situation.

► With time these normal reactions caused by unusual situations are relieved. They may, however, come back again even after long periods of time. Your reactions help you to work through the experience in your mind. Little by little you will recover from the shocking experience and life goes on.

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

- Talk to other people about your experiences. Tell them what you were thinking and feeling during and after the accident. You work through your unpleasant experiences when you talk about them.
- Go back to the scene, if possible, for example with someone close to you.
- Meet people with similar experiences.
- Continue to work with old routine tasks if it is difficult to concentrate on demanding duties. Tell your superior and colleagues about your shocking experience so that they can understand.
- Physical exercise is good for you because it relieves tension. A walk helps.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol and tranquillisers.
- Listen to what people close to you feel and think. The incident has affected them too.
- Remember that your reactions are normal and unavoidable. It is worthwhile to express even frightening and strange feelings.
- Crying makes you feel better.
- Sometimes it is easier to express your feelings by doing rather than talking. Draw, paint, write, play music or exercise.

CHILDREN NEED SUPPORT

- Children react to shocking events as adults do.
- Talk about what has happened with children.
- Encourage children to express their feelings for example through playing or drawing.
- Do not hide your own feelings too much.
- Give children time to understand.
- Support children's sense of security by keeping up everyday routines.

WHEN DO YOU NEED HELP FROM OTHERS?

- You are continuously anxious, depressed and tense.
- It is difficult for you to fall asleep and you sleep restlessly.
- You cannot concentrate.
- You cannot work efficiently.
- You have physical symptoms that do not have obvious reasons.
- You have no-one to confide to.
- Your relations with others suffer, you isolate yourself.
- You have lost your joy of life.
- You use too much medicine or alcohol.
- You have suicidal thoughts.

► Seek help from other people if you recognise even some of these symptoms.

HELP AVAILABLE

Health centres and hospitals, emergency groups, occupational health services, social welfare offices, mental health services, family counselling services, church parishes, crisis centres and various organisations.

National telephone helplines in Finland

- Crisis helpline (Finnish Association for Mental Health) 0203 445 566
- Lutheran Church helpline 01019 0071
- Helpline for Children and Youth (Mannerheim League of Child Welfare) 0800 120400
- Victim Support Finland 0203 16116

► You can also ask for help from the general emergency number 112.

Working together

VIKING LINE

Finland	+358 600 415 77	www.vikingline.fi
Sweden	+46 8 452 40 00	www.vikingline.se
Estonia	+372 666 39 66	www.vikingline.ee
Åland	+358 18 262 11	www.vikingline.ax
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Finnish Red Cross

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event