

# Trauma Response

A traumatic event is a shocking, scary or dangerous experience. These situations may be natural, like a tornado or earthquake. They can also be caused by other people, like a car accident, crime or physical attack.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event—either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.



## Recognize Trauma Responses

Many reactions tend to be triggered by persons, places or things associated with the trauma. These are **normal** reactions to **abnormal** events.

### Physical Reactions

- Sudden sweating and/or heart palpitations
- Easily startled by noises or unexpected touch
- Aches and pains like headaches or stomach aches
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite and interest in sex
- Difficulty concentrating, feeling anxious

### Emotional Reactions

- Shock and disbelief
- Fear and/or anxiety
- Denial and/or disorientation
- Irritability and/or restlessness
- Feeling hopeless
- Emotional numbing
- Depression and emotional swings

## Prevalence of PTSD

**70%** of adults experience at least one traumatic event in their lifetime



**1 IN 13 PEOPLE** will develop PTSD at some point in their life

**20%** of people who experience a traumatic event will develop PTSD



Prevalence of PTSD in the United States is equal to the **TOTAL POPULATION OF TEXAS**

## Coping with Trauma

- **Give it time.** It may take weeks, months and in some cases years to reestablish normalcy.
- **Seek help, support and understanding.** Many people need the support of family and friends for encouragement and to draw comfort. Additionally, individual, group or family counseling is very helpful.
- **Mobilize a support system.**
  - Turn to family and friends
  - Draw comfort from your faith/spirituality
  - Join a support group
  - Talk to a therapist

### Identify helpful strategies.

- Exercise such as jogging, bicycling, walking, etc.
- Relaxation exercises such as yoga, stretching or a massage
- Humor
- Maintain a balanced diet and sleep cycle
- Avoid overusing stimulants like caffeine or sugar
- Write about your experience
- Cry (or other appropriate release of emotions)
- Pro-active response toward personal safety

## Helping Others Cope with Trauma

The greatest thing you can do is show your love and support by being a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on. If words are necessary here are a few ways to start dialogue:

1. "How can I best support you right now?"
2. "You are not alone. I am here for you."
3. "Are there any resources or information you need?"

