



Information for Family and Friends of those affected by a Traumatic Event

C O N T E N T S

- What is happening to my family member/friend?
- Things that may help your family member/friend
- Where to seek professional help
- Contact details

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO MY FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND?

Your family member/friend has been involved in an emotion-charged incident, often known as a traumatic event. This Fact Sheet gives some information to assist you to support them after such an event.

Here are some things to remember:

- The signs of stress after such an event can include physical, emotional and behavioural changes. Signs such as agitation, tearfulness and sadness are not uncommon. Read the Fact Sheet, 'Information to Help you Cope with a Traumatic Event' for more details.
- These signs can occur at the time of the event, within hours, within days, or even within weeks. Some people do not experience any changes at all and this is ok and not uncommon.
- The signs will normally subside and disappear in time. There are things that can be done to help reduce them.

THINGS THAT MAY HELP YOUR FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND

- Don't be afraid to ask what you can do that they would find helpful.
- You may not understand what your family member/friend is going through at this time, but offer your love and support.
- Encourage, but do NOT pressure them to talk about the incident and their reaction to it. Talk can be the best medicine. Your primary 'job' is to listen and reassure. Remember that if an event is upsetting to you and your family member/friend, your children may be affected also. They may need to talk too.
- Encourage them to have some periods of strenuous physical exercise. These alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- The reactions they are experiencing are not unusual after such an event. Recognise this and reinforce it with them.
- Encourage them to avoid over use of drugs or alcohol, including caffeine and cigarettes.
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible.
- Encourage them to spend time with others or help them organise time alone if needed.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Encourage them to get plenty of rest and maintain a healthy diet.
- Re-occurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – encourage them not to fight them – they should decrease over time and become less painful.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" – traumatised people are not consoled by these statements. Instead tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

WHERE TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

If the signs of stress your family member/friend is experiencing do not begin to subside, if they intensify, or if you are concerned in any way, consider seeking further assistance. The Trauma Recovery Team and University Counselling Service can help you both.

CONTACT DETAILS

Hobart

Student Union Building, Top Floor
Phone: 6226 2697

Launceston

Kerslake Student Centre, Ground Floor
Phone: 6324 3787

Cradle Coast

Mooreville Road, Burnie
Phone: 6430 4949

If you need urgent assistance after hours we suggest you call Lifeline, 13 11 14, otherwise contact us on the above numbers during office hours.