

Coping with Difficult Events

Common Trauma Reactions

- Reliving or re-experiencing the event
- Unwanted memories of the event
- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Feeling keyed up or on edge
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Nightmares or problems sleeping

Common Trauma/Grief Reactions

- Negative emotions
 - Anxiety/panic attacks
 - Sadness/grief
 - Depression
 - Irritability
- Physical Symptoms
 - Problems sleeping
 - Fatigue/exhaustion
 - Aches and pains
 - Tension in muscles

Another common reaction is feeling emotionally numb. This does NOT mean that you didn't care. Your body and mind are just processing the emotion in their own time.

Your responses are NORMAL reactions to ABNORMAL events

Tips for healing

- Know what's happening – understand your responses as unpleasant but normal
- Take care of yourself – don't just push through
 - Get good sleep
 - Exercise
 - Eat good food
- Don't rush it – accept what feelings do or do not come
- Use your social support – don't go it alone
- Know it's temporary – it will pass

When to seek more help

- If your distress doesn't get better after you practice the coping skills mentioned
- Prolonged feelings of sadness/depression
- Long lasting anxiety
- Withdrawal from friends or family
- Chronic problems sleeping
- Thoughts of suicide

Help can look like:

- Support groups (formal or informal)
- Trauma-focused counseling
- Changing things up
- Psychiatric medication – can help with mood and sleep problems

Adapted from: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/anniversary_reactions.asp
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/how-be-yourself/201609/5-ways-deal-anniversary-reactions>

