
INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE
RESILIENCE RX™
TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

DEBRIEFING SUPPORT AFTER AN UPSETTING EVENT

SELF CARE TECHNIQUES

The science behind why they work and how to implement them after loss



An iCare Aftercare™ resource
International Grief Institute
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DEBRIEFING SUPPORT

Any event that is emotionally upsetting has the potential to interfere with one's ability to function. It's normal for individuals who witness a shocking event to experience a combination of stress reactions called aftershocks.

HOW STRESS AFTERSHOCKS AFFECT US

Stress aftershocks may manifest as any combination of reactions. Below are common aftershock symptoms you may experience.



If you want to support others, you have to stay upright yourself. —PETER HOEG

BEHAVIORAL

- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Intolerance
- ✓ Resentment
- ✓ Lashing out
- ✓ Increased risk-taking
- ✓ Distrust
- ✓ Misuse of alcohol or other impairment substances
- ✓ Regression of addiction struggles

COGNITIVE

- ✓ Forgetfulness
- ✓ Poor concentration
- ✓ Low productivity
- ✓ Negative attitude
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Sensory distortion
- ✓ Mental fog
- ✓ Problem solving issues
- ✓ Hypervigilance
- ✓ Decision difficulties

EMOTIONAL

- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Overwhelmed
- ✓ Frustration
- ✓ Mood swings
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Nightmares
- ✓ Crying spells
- ✓ Deep sadness
- ✓ Irritability

WHAT TO KNOW

- ✓ Symptoms can manifest as any combination of behavioral, cognitive, emotional, physical and/or spiritual reactions
- ✓ Symptoms may appear soon after the event or much later
- ✓ Symptoms may last for months
- ✓ Triggers are common and may occur for some time (seek help if they don't resolve)

PHYSICAL

- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Appetite change
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Insomnia
- ✓ Muscle tension
- ✓ Restlessness
- ✓ Upset stomach
- ✓ Elevated blood pressure

SPIRITUAL

- ✓ Emptiness
- ✓ Loss of meaning
- ✓ Doubt
- ✓ Unforgiving
- ✓ Loss of direction
- ✓ Loss of faith
- ✓ Cynicism

NOTE:

Call 911 immediately for any chest pain or shortness of breath.

WHAT'S NORMAL

Stress reactions can vary, yet aftershocks are a normal reaction to an abnormal event, and you really aren't going crazy (although it often feels like it). Because your own personality, inner resilience and life experiences will differ, avoid comparing your reactions with others. Each person will process the upsetting event in their own way and time.

TRIGGERS

Triggers are anything that brings up memories of the event, and ambush our emotions, sparking anxiety or an emotional outburst. Individuals who experienced the same event may not share the same triggers. Don't minimize the trigger as insignificant, just allow your brain to continue to process the event.

Cope with triggers by doing 10 gentle jumping jacks followed by 3 slow deep belly breaths to calm your body and brain.

SELF CARE TIPS

When you feel better, you cope better.

- ✓ Stay hydrated
- ✓ Strive for restorative sleep
- ✓ Avoid alcohol (it's a depressant)
- ✓ Avoid numbing the stress
- ✓ Seek support by talking with others who shared the event
- ✓ Seek support by talking with loved ones
- ✓ Try journaling to externalize your inner thoughts and feelings
- ✓ Engage in activities that trigger endorphins
- ✓ Avoid big decisions until your cognition and emotions stabilize

✓ Seek medical care for physical symptoms that don't resolve