

WHEN DIFFICULT THINGS HAPPEN

There is a wide range of natural and expected feelings and experiences following a traumatic or adverse event. There is no right or wrong way to feel, and the recovery process takes time and intention. Remember, as we are all unique, others may be healing at a different pace and in a different way than you.

| Following a Traumatic or Adverse Event | |
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| Common Reactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion, disorientation, worry, overwhelm, fear, intrusive thoughts and images, heightened alert, self-blame • Shock, sorrow, grief, fear, anger, numbness, irritability, guilt, shame • Extreme withdrawal, interpersonal conflict, feeling weary and exhausted • Fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, stomach upset, increased heart rate, exaggerated startle response • Difficulty sleeping, eating, focusing |
| Helpful Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving yourself permission to feel whatever you feel • Talking to another person/spending time with others • Focusing on something practical that you can do right now • Engaging in activities that help you ground in your body and in the present moment • Employing relaxation methods • Prioritizing sleep, remembering to hydrate, and eating nourishing foods • Maintaining as normal of a schedule as you are able • Grounding exercises (Soothe Overwhelm) • Seeking counseling (contact FEAP) |
| Promoting Growth after Trauma | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus first on re-establishing a sense of physical, psychological, and emotional safety. • Allow yourself to include your full range of emotional responses as they arise. Try to name what you feel (outraged, scared, bewildered, loving) and take a breath. Connect with offered supports and/or trusted others to process feelings and experiences. • Produce a narrative authentic to you and your experience about the trauma and life afterward to help with acceptance of what has occurred. • Act in ways that benefit or simply express gratitude and show compassion to others. • Reconnect with your values and make choices that are aligned with what matters to you the most. • Look for personal and shared missions that energize you and help you find meaning. |

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Responses that Can Lead to Greater Suffering:

Please reach out if you experience any of the following

- Using alcohol or drugs to cope
- Working too much
- Extreme avoidance of thinking or talking about the traumatic event(s)/experience(s)
- Violence or conflict
- Not taking care of yourself

If you need help, please reach out to FEAP:

- <https://uvafeap.com/>
- 434-243-2643
- feap@uvahealth.org