

## What professional support can I expect?

- Effective treatment for trauma aims to enable people to come to terms with the traumatic event, by exploring feelings and fears, talking it through and developing coping mechanisms
- NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) guidelines on effective treatment for trauma can be ordered by calling: 0870 155 5455 (quote reference CG26) or online at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)
- Medication may sometimes be recommended and, for some people, can be helpful in treating symptoms.

## Where do I find help?

- > **The 7 July Assistance helpline and centre** provides information, emotional support and practical advice to all those who find that they feel affected by the London bombings.  
**tel:** 0845 054 7444  
[www.7julyassistance.org.uk](http://www.7julyassistance.org.uk)
- > Specialist trauma support is also available from the NHS for people who continue to experience significant difficulties several weeks after the event. Contact your GP or **The NHS Trauma Response (London bombings)** telephone line to find out more about the help available.  
**tel:** 0845 850 2878 (Monday to Friday 9.00 - 6.00, except bank holidays).

- > For general health advice and information, you can contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 (24 hours), [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or speak to your GP.

### Other support groups and caring organisations you may find helpful include:

- > **The Samaritans** – Offers a 24-hour helpline for those in crisis.  
**tel:** 08457 90 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)
- > **Cruse** – Bereavement Care – Offers counselling, advice and support throughout the UK.  
**tel:** 0870 167 1677  
(Monday - Friday 9.30am - 5pm).  
[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)
- > **Disaster Action** – Provides support and guidance to those affected by disasters.  
**tel:** 01483 799 066  
[www.disasteraction.org.uk](http://www.disasteraction.org.uk)
- > **Assist Trauma Care** – Offers telephone counselling and support to individuals and families in the aftermath of trauma.  
**tel:** 01788 560800 (Helpline).

### For useful information on coping with trauma see the following websites:

[www.istss.org](http://www.istss.org)  
[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/infodindex.htm](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/infodindex.htm)  
[www.uktrauma.org.uk](http://www.uktrauma.org.uk)  
[webmaster@uktrauma.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@uktrauma.org.uk)

Compiled by the Traumatic Stress Clinic Camden and Islington Mental Health and Social Care Trust on behalf of the NHS Trauma Response (London Bombings) programme. July 2005.



# COPING WITH THE STRESS OF A MAJOR INCIDENT

If you have been involved in a traumatic incident, in particular the London bombings in July, you may find this leaflet helpful. It provides information on how you may expect to feel in the days and months after the incident, to give you better understanding and more control over your experiences.

## The aftermath of an incident

---

**Overall people are resilient, and most people will recover without long term problems.**

However, what you have seen and heard may have an effect upon you. Although you may not have been physically injured, coming to terms with these events can be difficult. Each person's experience of the traumatic event, and their feelings afterwards are unique. The incident may arouse powerful and upsetting feelings, although these usually settle in time without professional help.

## How you might be affected

---

**After any major incident, it is normal to experience a number of stress reactions that may continue for some weeks.**

After an event where there is loss, it is also normal to experience grief. Traumatic events are shocking and emotionally overwhelming situations. People directly involved or those who lost loved ones may be most affected. However, witnesses of these events, friends and relatives may also be affected.

## How you might feel immediately after the event

---

### Shock

- Feeling stunned, dazed or numb
- Feeling cut off from your emotions and what is going on around you

### Denial

- Finding it difficult to accept that this has happened
- Behaving as if it hasn't happened.

Over several hours or days, the feelings of shock gradually fade and other reactions may take their place.

## Reactions commonly experienced within the first few weeks of a traumatic event include:

---

- Tearfulness and sadness
- Fear and anxiety
- Feeling numb or dreamlike
- Unpleasant thoughts and images about the event
- Nightmares
- Reluctance to discuss the event or wanting to talk about it all the time
- Sleep difficulties and tiredness
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Wanting to avoid people, places or activities that remind you of the event (this might include travelling on public transport)
- Feeling guilty or to blame for some aspect of the trauma
- Concentration and memory problems
- Headaches and bodily pain
- Young people and children often become unsettled in their behaviour. Their behaviour may be more aggressive or fearful than

usual. They may become clingy and demanding. They may also 're-play' the trauma in their play.

These reactions are normal, understandable and usually reduce gradually over time.

## What can I do that's helpful?

---

**Taking each day at a time is essential after any traumatic event. It is important to establish a sense of safety and security. It is often helpful to try to:**

- Be patient with yourself - it may take weeks or months to learn to live with what has happened
- Try to re-establish your usual routines such as going to work or school
- Spend time with family, friends, and peers, who may be able to help to support you through this difficult time
- Children need support and reassurance from trusted adults who can help the child to feel safe, and to talk about their fears and worries, as they wish
- You may find it helpful to spend time with others who have been through the same experience as you and for example, mark the loss by attending memorial services or funerals
- Take good care of yourself physically, including eating well, exercising regularly, reducing alcohol and/or drug use and getting enough sleep to reduce stress and prevent physical illness
- Talk it over when you feel ready

and comfortable to do so. Don't worry if you get upset or cry while doing this

- Take care – after a trauma, people are more likely to have accidents. Be careful with regards to driving and when around the home
- Limit your exposure to pictures of the event if they are distressing to you or your child.

## What would not be helpful?

---

- Don't bottle up your feelings – strong feelings are normal and bottling them up will make you feel worse. Let yourself talk as you feel ready
- Avoid drugs and alcohol - this can help numb your feelings but can stop you from coming to terms with what has happened
- It's advisable not to make any major life changes - your judgement may not be at its best and you may make decisions that you later regret.

## How would I decide if I need professional help?

---

**Most people who have encountered a traumatic event find that their symptoms subside over time.**

However, reactions and recovery times vary for different people. If your symptoms do not improve after 4-6 weeks and continue to concern you (e.g. because they are causing difficulties in your relationships or in your work), it may be beneficial to seek professional support.