

How will a tragic incident affect you?

All those involved in the incident will have been affected in some way, though each person's experiences of the event will be personal and therefore different.

No amount of training will prepare you for your own personal response.

You may have thoughts and feelings unlike any others you have had before or you may feel numb and emotionally detached.

These are **NORMAL** reactions to a very **ABNORMAL** experience and they may last for some time.

How might you and your colleagues react?

- Numbness
- Emotional detachment
- Functioning on auto-pilot
- Anxiety
- Feeling on edge and hyper-vigilant
- Depression
- Irritability and anger
- Sleep disturbance, nightmares
- Flashbacks and intrusive memories
- Headaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling guilty - "It was my fault" "I could have done more" "Why did I survive?"
- Worry about 'doing the right thing'

Coping with your feelings

This was a terrible event and the feelings and emotions you may be experiencing are a normal reaction to this.

- In the early stages you may have been in shock and felt confused and helpless. You may also have felt fear and sadness.
- As you thought about what happened you may have felt angry with yourself, with the school or with others. You may even have felt guilt and shame.
- Often physical reactions follow such events e.g. tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, headaches and short temper.
- Try not to bottle up your feelings. It is important to talk to others. Crying is natural and often gives relief. It is okay for others to see that you are upset.
- As well as talking, be ready to listen to others.
- You may need to have time on your own for private thoughts - explain to your family and friends, they will understand.
- Accidents are more likely to occur when you are under stress; please be careful and take your time.

Ways of looking after yourself

- Deal with practicalities and enlist appropriate support agencies e.g. dealing with the media.
- Make sure you are with people/seek a support system.
- Don't try to do everything yourself - delegate where appropriate.
- Talk about the incident with others but recognise you may want to be on your own.

- Be aware of the impact on your family and friends. Don't exclude them. You could talk to your family, friends and colleagues about the trauma it will help you get over your feelings.
- Remind yourself that your reactions are a normal result of experiencing traumatic events and will pass in time.
- Try to re-establish your normal routine as soon as possible, but don't demand too much of yourself.
- Give yourself permission to relax and enjoy yourself and do not work yourself into the ground.
- Allow yourself a relaxing activity/exercise. Use relaxation/deep breathing techniques if they help.
- Do some physical exercise to help 'burn off' the tension and anxiety.
- Work on your general stress levels by making sure that you have enough sleep, a good diet and regular exercise.
- Try to eat something even if you don't feel like it.
- Recognise that fatigue may set in when the adrenaline drops. Don't try to fight it - take a break.

Where to get further help

- Education Support Services can provide advice and support.
- Educational Psychology Service: 01454 863167
- Staff Counselling Service: 0117 944 6399; 0117 983 1465
- GP's are trained to assess physical and psychological needs.
- SAMARITANS: 08457 90 90 90; www.samaritans.org.uk
- Cruse: 0117 926 4045; www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- Winston's Wish: 0845 20 30 40 5; www.winstonswish.org.uk

Coping with crises in schools: a guide for school staff

Taking care of your school Taking care of yourself

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