



## CVT Advice for Responding to Traumatic Experiences

### What's normal after a dangerous, life-threatening or traumatic experience?

After an acute traumatic experience, it's important to notice how your mind and body are responding to your experience. Trauma is a complex process in our nervous system, and even when we might feel "fine," there might be some signs that our systems are reacting to our experiences. Below are some of the common psychological and physical reactions to acute traumatic incidents.

Psychological reactions		Physical reactions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fear</li><li>• Worry</li><li>• Nervousness</li><li>• Nightmares</li><li>• Replaying the memory</li><li>• Anger</li><li>• Sadness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feeling numb</li><li>• Feeling on guard</li><li>• Feeling easily startled</li><li>• Criticizing/blaming yourself</li><li>• Trying not to think about it</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trouble eating</li><li>• Trouble sleeping</li><li>• Racing heart</li><li>• Headache</li><li>• Pain in the body</li><li>• Extreme fatigue</li><li>• Tightness in the joints</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Upset stomach</li><li>• Sweating</li><li>• Chest pain</li></ul>

### What might I feel in the days and weeks after?

Sometimes it takes a few days or weeks for you to notice the impact of an acute trauma or life-threatening experience. This is because your nervous system is in "survival" mode – this is what is commonly referred to a "fight, flight or freeze" response.

Often, the first things you will notice are physical reactions. Body pains and aches, insomnia, or an upset stomach are common. It's easy to attribute this to other things going on in life or to illness, but often it is our body's way of telling us it is reacting to a life-threatening experience. This is why it is important to take care of your body and physical health immediately following an acute traumatic experience.

### What can I do for self-care?

*First, note how you are responding to the experience.*

- What are you feeling in your body?
- What are you feeling psychologically?

*Next, return to the basics: Rest your body and mind.*

- Eat healthy nutritious foods
- Prioritize sleep
- Drink water
- Light exercise such as walks
- A warm shower or bath
- Connect with people you love and trust

*Finally, make a self-care plan*

Self-care is not a “one-size fits all.” It will look different for everyone. [Here is an example of a Self-care Wheel](#). From this wheel, select activities that will restore you after your experience. Next, use the self-care plan worksheet to decide how you will care for yourself.

### **How to access more support**

If several weeks or months go by and you are not feeling better, you may be experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is important to seek support from an experienced trauma therapist as early as possible. Below are some basic resources for seeking and starting therapy.

#### **Therapy Resources**

[Talk the Talk: 10 Tips for Starting Therapy](#)

[How to Start Therapy NPR Life Kit Podcast](#)

[How to Prepare for Your First Therapy Session](#)

[What to Expect During Your First Therapy Session](#)

[Psychology Today](#): The most comprehensive national therapist database

Psychology Today is a website that includes a database of therapists practicing nationally. Each therapist on the website has been verified through the Psychology Today system. The benefits of using this system are that it shows you many therapists in your area, allows you to control for therapists who take your insurance, and allows you to filter for other preferences, such as gender identity, area of specialization, and location. You can also use the system to make phone calls and send emails with inquiries. The cons are that there are quite a few therapists listed and it can take time to sort through the options.



# My Self-Care Plan

## Regular activities:

- 
- 
- 

## New tactics to try:

- 
- 
- 

## These activities help me at work:

- 
- 
- 

## Warning signs:

- 
- 
-