

Taking care of yourself after a traumatic event

A critical incident is any sudden or unexpected traumatic event that affects your emotional life, feelings of safety or ability to cope. A death, accident, illness, robbery, assault, fire, flood, act of terrorism or domestic abuse are all examples of traumatic events that could affect your sense of well-being. And in today's economic climate, layoffs and reductions in force can impact your sense of security and cause difficulty coping as well, even if you're not the one who has been terminated. You may experience feelings of grief about co-workers who no longer have jobs.

Following a critical incident, it's normal to feel "out of sorts" and many people experience some common stress reactions. These reactions may interfere with your ability to function at home and work. Symptoms can occur immediately after an event, or even days, weeks or months later.

Just like a physical injury, traumatic stress should be acknowledged and treated. In some cases, we are able to recognize our feelings and find ways to address and resolve the stress. Other times, the event is so traumatic, or so close to us, that we need help moving through the grief, fear, anger or other feelings that have resulted from the event. Failure to address these symptoms can result in a stress-induced illness.

You can help yourself following a traumatic event by . . .

- Exercising to alleviate physical symptoms
- Talking about the event with others who care
- Asking for help if you need it
- Keeping a normal schedule
- Getting plenty of rest
- Eating regular well-balanced meals

Don't . . .

- Label your reactions as "crazy" or "stupid"
- Make sudden, big life changes • Isolate or withdraw from others
- Drink alcohol or abuse other drugs to alleviate difficult feelings
- Tell yourself to "snap out of it"
- Block thoughts or try to force yourself not to think about it
(Let the memories occur naturally they will pass.)

Indications that you need help . . .

- Use of alcohol or drugs to dull emotions
- Severe sleeping or eating problems
- Persistent feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Rages
- Inability to motivate self

Some Signs of Stress

- Changes in appetite • Digestive problems
- Difficulty sleeping • Headaches
- Anger • Hyper-vigilance • Suspicion
- Depression • Crying spells
- Feelings of powerlessness • Feeling overwhelmed
- Moodiness and irritability • Anxiety/Worry
- Loss of concentration • Withdrawal from others
- Nightmares

If you've experienced a traumatic event in your personal or work life, Ease@Work can help. As your employee assistance program, we can offer counselors who will help you address feelings and stresses resulting from your specific situation. Counseling is offered one-on-one and is completely confidential.

Go to www.easeatwork.com/easey with your organization's user name and password, or call 216.241.3273 or 800.521.3273.

EASE@Work newsletters are for informational purposes only and should not replace the advice of a qualified health professional. If you would like to speak with a professional counselor, call EASE@Work: 216/241-3273 or 800/521-3273 . . . We can help!

Warning signs might signal an emergency

Sometimes children cannot communicate what's wrong, which means an adult has to interpret their behavior. Medical emergencies can occur from sudden events, such as a fall, motor vehicle accident, or other easily noticed trauma. However, medical emergencies can also result from unknown events, such as a shock; a foreign body in the nose, ear or eye; hypothermia; animal or human bites; and head injuries.

Unintentional injuries are the #1 cause of death in children aged 1-21. The most common causes are related to motor vehicle accidents, drowning, fires and burns, suffocation, choking, unintentional firearm injuries, falls and poisoning.

- From permanente.net

Watch for these symptoms that might indicate a potential medical emergency. Consider immediate medical attention if your child exhibits any of the following:

- Strange or withdrawn behavior or any significant change from normal behavior
- Abnormal or difficult breathing
- Decreasing alertness or responsiveness
- Excessive sleepiness
- Unusual irritability
- Feeding difficulties/difficulty eating
- Confusion or delirium
- Skin or lips that look purple, blue or gray for darker-skinned children
- Unconsciousness
- Uncontrolled bleeding – including nosebleeds
- Increasing or severe, on-going pain
- Fever accompanied by changes in behavior or mental status
- Fever accompanied by severe, sudden headache, neck/back stiffness or rashes
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea

Do you have an emergency plan?

You're at work or traveling and have a situation where you cannot meet your child at the time they expected you. Or, your child's school closes due to an emergency situation. Have you discussed with your child what each of you are to do when something unexpected happens?

While cell phones have made communication much easier, perhaps your child does not have a cell phone, or perhaps cell communication isn't available... what then? Having a plan can help reduce stress and worry for both the parent and child when things don't go as anticipated.

Discuss the following before an emergency occurs:

- How will you contact your child? How should your child contact you? Is there someone you or your child can call as alternatives? Have phone numbers available.
- What to do if phones aren't available. Establish a meeting time, meeting place or other arrangements such as walking to a friend or relative's house, if feasible.
- Know the emergency protocol for your child's school.

Similar conversations should take place before dropping your child off at a friend's house, at the mall, sporting event or any site away from home.

Supporting a child through a loss

Children are not immune to feelings of loss and grief. Whether due to death, or a change in the family unit due to divorce or a move, children need support, stability and honesty about the loss. They need to be assured their feelings are normal and that they have a safe outlet for expressing those feelings. As an adult, you can support children through the grieving process by demonstrating it's OK to be sad and helping them make sense of the loss.

Answer any questions the child may have as truthfully as possible. Use simple, honest and concrete terms when explaining death or divorce to a child. Children (especially young children) may blame themselves for what happened and the truth helps them see they are not at fault.

Open communication will also smooth the way for children to express scary or distressing feelings. Because children often express themselves through artwork, games and stories, encourage this self-expression and watch for clues in those activities regarding how they are coping.

Helping a grieving child through a death

- Allow your child, however young, to attend the funeral if he/she wants.
- Talk about your family's spiritual values about life and death, or pray with your child.
- Meet regularly as a family to find out how everyone is coping.
- Help children find a way to symbolize and memorialize the deceased person.
- Keep your child's daily routine as normal as possible.

What not to do

- Don't force a child to publicly mourn if he/she doesn't want to.
- Don't give false or confusing messages, such as "Grandma is sleeping now."
- Don't tell a child to stop crying because others might get upset.
- Don't try to shield a child from the loss. Including children in the grieving process will help them adapt and heal.
- Don't stifle your tears. By crying in front of your child, you send the message that it's OK for him/her to express feelings, too.

Knowing when an elderly loved one needs help

All too often, it takes a critical incident of some kind to trigger changes in the care of an aging loved one. Family members are going about their regular business of work and family, then mom or dad falls in their own home, or ends up in the

hospital, and everything changes. There are now new concerns about an elderly loved one's safety and abilities to live independently.

As people age, their needs and abilities change. Adult children and caregivers may notice that a parent's memory is not what it once was, or they may be having difficulty getting around the house or completing their daily routines. And, while we all want our elderly loved ones to live

independently as long as possible, how do we know when it's time to consider the need for other types of care and assistance?

Assessing a loved one's abilities...

An assessment will create a full picture of a person's mental, physical, environment and financial abilities. This can help the family determine his/her ability to remain safely independent. Assessments can be done by geriatric specialists and other professionals with experience in the needs of the aging, such as doctors, social and other health care workers.

Here are some basics to focus on:

Physical health

Do they have any chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, emphysema? Do they have other diseases or conditions, such as bowel/bladder problems, heart disease, a history of strokes or cancer? Do they have vision or hearing problems? Excessive weight loss/gain? Difficulty walking? Make a list of their doctors and any recent hospitalizations.

Medication use

Write down the medications they are currently taking, the dosage and how often. Include over-the-counter medications. Are they taking their medications as directed, or do they miss or overdose?

Mental health

Have they been diagnosed with any disorders, such as depression, anxiety or psychosis? Have they been diagnosed with any form of dementia or suspected dementia (Alzheimer's)? Do they show signs of confusion, disorientation or isolation? Do they have mood swings? Repeated incidents of forgetfulness? Are they experiencing sadness or loneliness?

Daily living skills

Are they able to bathe, dress, get out of bed, get out of a chair, use a toilet, climb stairs and use the phone? Do they know how to get help in the event of an emergency? Are they able to shop, prepare meals (use the stove/oven), do housework and yard work? Can they safely drive?

Hygiene

How is their overall appearance? Clean body and hair? Teeth brushed? Shaved? Do they dress appropriately and wear clean clothes?

Community Safety

Is their neighborhood safe? Does their home have a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector that they can hear and respond to if necessary? Do they know how to avoid telephone and door-to-door fraud?

Finances

Can they live on their current income? Can they meet future needs on their income? Do they have the appropriate documents in place, such as trusts, living wills and/or power of attorney? Do they pay bills on time and make informed financial decisions?

Interests

Do they have hobbies, read books, watch favorite TV shows, exercise, play games, stay in touch with friends? Are they still engaged in activities they have been known to enjoy in the past?

Support systems

Does your loved one have visitors or see friends? Do they get out of the house for social reasons? Do family members/friends live close by? Do they have a list of family/friends that they can call in case of an emergency?

Ease@Work eldercare specialists can assist in the conversation regarding the future care and needs of an elderly loved one. It's always best to address concerns early and discuss options with your elderly family member while they are able to contribute to the discussion and express their desires. Not only does this create a long-term plan that can assist a loved one to live independently longer, but it also helps the caregiver avoid the need to make decisions under pressure in an emergency situation without any forethought.

Ease@Work has eldercare specialists who can help you navigate through the stresses and information overload associated with caring for an elderly loved one.

Make Ease@Work your partner in eldercare ...

216.241.3273 or 800.521.3273.

82.6 percent of caregivers report a critical incident as a trigger for their decision to seek assistance in care, including nursing facility care, for their loved one.

The most often cited reasons for their decision include:

"I couldn't forgive myself if something happened."

"It was ruining my life;

I couldn't keep up with everything I needed to do."

"I had no other choice."

- Source: ebmentalhealth.com

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR CHANGING TIMES

Many families are facing changes in individual and combined family income. Unemployment – both long-term and short-term layoffs – less hours and decreased overtime can all affect one's ability to meet financial obligations.

When changes occur in family income, it's important not to panic. What you need to do immediately is develop a plan to help you survive this setback until you are able to return to your previous income level.

Make a list of expenses

Until you write it down, it's hard to know where your money is going. Break it down this way:

Fixed expenses – rent/mortgage, car payment, medical bills, alimony/child support, credit cards, savings.

Variable expenses – groceries, eating out, child care, household/miscellaneous, clothing, utilities.

Periodic expenses – income/property taxes, home repair/maintenance, car repair/maintenance.

Cut expenses

For most, the obvious places where expenses can be cut are in the variable category. Go through your list of variable expenses and set the lowest limits for each that you can live with. This may be difficult and it may require changing some habits, such as how often you eat out, or the amount you spend on outside recreation.

You may need to make it harder to spend money. Try the following tips:

Stop carrying your credit cards. Pay in cash.

Make grocery shopping count. Make a list of the foods you need to buy and stick to it. Clip coupons, buying only the items you would typically shop for. Shop once a week. Buy store brands when possible. Stay away from junk foods and prepared foods – they cost more!

Avoid restaurants and malls. It's a lot cheaper to eat at home or pack a homemade lunch. Also, it's easy to spend money on impulse at a mall. Change how you think about shopping. It is not entertainment; it's an expensive part of a family budget.

Find cheaper forms of entertainment. Look for no cost fun, such as playing outside, walking around a public park, playing games/cards etc.

Economize at home. Turn off lights and the TV when not in use. Run the dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer with full loads. Set thermostats at lower temperatures during the winter; open the windows and use fans instead of air conditioning during the summer when possible.

Remember, many people are dealing with the same financial concerns – meeting financial obligations with less dollars. If you need help with money issues, it may be wise to talk with a financial planner.

Need financial advice?

Ease@Work can connect you with an expert who can provide direction regarding budgeting, debt repayment, retirement planning, college savings, investing and more!

Call us at 216.241.3273 or 800.521.3273.

Ways to create additional income

Sell your skills – typing, doing taxes, taking photos, cake decorating, giving music or dance lessons, tutoring. . . stop and think about what special skills you have that others could benefit from.

Sell old valuables – walk through your home and take inventory of those items you no longer use: baby furniture, a freezer, power tools, photo equipment, musical instruments. Sell these through an ad in a local newspaper or other website listing, such as Craigslist (free) or Ebay.

Clean out the garage – yes, have a garage sale! You'd be surprised how much all those small, low priced items will add up to. . . and the people who will want what you no longer have a use for. Nothing is off limits for this sale – even items at 25-cents each will add up to dollars.

Sell luxuries – get rid of the second car, a boat, a fur coat, or any other luxury items you may have. Pay off debt and bank anything left.



Have a teen looking for a summer job? Help them get a resume together!

Your high-schooler may not think they need a resume, but they could benefit from having one as much as a college student. From getting into a college to obtaining part-time or summer employment, a resume is critical because it can show college recruiters and potential employers a brief snapshot of abilities, education and experiences. This simple tool could give a teen the edge over other applicants who have not taken the initiative to create a resume.

Here's what your teen should include:

Heading – Name, address, phone number, e-mail address should all go at the top of the resume. Remember to use an e-mail address that sounds professional.

Objective – For those with little or no work experience, an objective lets college recruiters or potential employers know your main goal. Examples: "To earn a degree in Psychology at (college name)" or "To obtain a part-time summer sales position with (employer name)."

Education/Academics – List the schools attended and grade point average if it's a 3.0 or higher. Mention any academic awards or recognitions received, including honor roll, essay-writing awards, speaking awards, science competitions etc.

Experience – List any previous work or volunteer experiences. Include title of position, name of organization, location of work, dates and a description of work responsibilities. If your teen does not have a lot of work experience, focus on volunteer activities, participation in class or religious/spiritual projects.

Extracurricular activities – Describe special skills, leadership roles, participation in sports, band, yearbook etc. This is where your child should showcase their uniqueness.

References – Be sure your teen asks people if they will be a reference before providing their name or contact info to potential employers.

FitTips @Work } Burn Calories FAST with

plyometrics {plural noun}

A system of exercise in which the muscles are repeatedly stretched and suddenly contracted [from dictionary.com]

If you are looking for a way to torch calories in less time, then practice plyometrics.

Plyometrics, often referred to as jump training, are high-impact activities that may consist of jumping rope, jumping jacks, tire runs, leaping from side-to-side and other exercises that get you off of the ground.

Plyometrics are designed to improve performance through rapid, explosive movements. Try any of the above exercises for short bursts of 30 seconds to experience the power of plyometrics.

Learn more plyometric exercises by contacting a FitIn@Work fitness coach.

Parfait Perfection

Use this perfect parfait for a yummy breakfast or quick-fix dessert!

Yogurt – plain or fat free vanilla ■ Fresh fruit of your choice (bananas, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries etc.) ■ Honey, Stevia or Agave (optional sweetener) ■ Chopped nuts (optional – walnuts/almonds) ■ Whipped topping – no fat/low fat (optional)

Using approximately 6 ounces of yogurt, layer about 3 ounces (about ½ of a pre-packaged yogurt cup) in the bottom of a bowl or glass. Cover the yogurt with your fruit(s) of choice and nuts. If using plain yogurt, you may want to drizzle a little honey over the fruit and nuts. Add the remainder of the yogurt on top of the fruit and nuts. Top with additional fruit. Top with a tablespoon of whipped topping if desired.

These parfaits can be made in advance, excluding the whipped topping, which should be put on right before serving. Use clear plastic cups for kids or to-go breakfast cups. Dress up as a dessert by serving in a martini-type glass.

Juggling commitments with good time management

Most of us are constantly shifting our focus from one job to another. We move smoothly through our days taking care of responsibilities at work and at home. Well, maybe not so smoothly sometimes! Take the demands of a daily work schedule and combine that with the unexpected urgent work orders, kids schedules, checking on mom or dad, taking care of a household and then getting up and doing it all again the next day, it's easy to see how overwhelming it can be to coordinate all of those tasks.

Good time management can help you get the important tasks done, while doing things efficiently so you can accomplish more. Try these tips for better time management:

1. Focus. Write down the important things you need to focus on each day. As projects come and go, modify the list.
2. Write it down. If your head is cluttered in trying to remember too many tasks, you won't get as much done. Write everything you need to do in a spiral notebook. As other things come up, add them to your notebook.
3. Keep a daily "to do" list. Each day, write down the 12 most important things you need to accomplish tomorrow.
4. Make a daily schedule. Schedule necessary appointments/meetings first. Then review your to-do list and schedule time to accomplish those. Leave about 30 percent of your time open for interruptions and emergencies.
5. Delegate. Look at your to-do list and decide what items can be given to someone else to complete, whether it be another staff member at work, or a spouse/partner or child at home.
6. Multi-task when possible. Take care of simple projects simultaneously – cook dinner while returning phone calls or fold clothes while watching TV.
7. Group like activities. Keep a list of errands and take care of them once a week. Return calls during a certain time period. Pay bills at one time every week or every two weeks.
8. Organize and simplify. You will save time if you don't have to look for something or dig through clutter.
9. Analyze everything. Look for quicker, more efficient ways to do things.
10. Read better. Learn to skim for information. Highlight important items for easy retrieval later. Carry reading material with you everywhere you go, so as to not waste time when waiting for appointments or for the kids.

