

How to recover after a traumatic event

Give yourself time



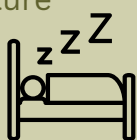
While the event may be over, your mind and body need time to 'catch up'. This takes time and can't be hurried along. Be patient with yourself. You may have nights where you have difficulty sleeping. You may find that you are 'jumpy'. You may find yourself easily distracted. Hopefully these things will improve naturally, but it takes some time. Practice self kindness.

Slowly return to work



Your mind and nervous system have been overwhelmed and your mind and body need time to begin feeling safe again. Additionally, your memory and concentration are likely to be impacted- it may be dangerous for you to work too soon. Going back to work will be important but for the first few days at least take some time to nurture yourself.

Sleep



Sleeping can be challenging after experiencing a traumatic event. You can support your sleep recovery by: keeping a regular bedtime, avoiding day naps longer than 20mins, avoiding caffeinated drinks within 4 hours of bedtime, avoiding alcohol before bed, a warm bath/shower before bed, keep your bedroom dark and don't use screens for an hour before bed.

Get help with big decisions



Your ability to think clearly may not be as good as it usually is. If you don't need to make decisions then leave them for a while. If you do have to make decisions, try to have someone alongside you that you can trust.

Expressing your emotions



You may feel a lot of strong and contrasting emotions. Finding a safe way to express these can be helpful. You may like to write about your thoughts and feelings in a journal, draw/paint an illustration of your feelings, speak to a compassionate listener about your feelings, spend time in a hobby that you enjoy noticing your feelings coming and going.

Connect



Find one person (or more) who will be with you and understand what you are going through. Who is the most compassionate person in your life? Ask them to support you in these early days. Spend time with people who are calm and reassuring. Let the important people in your life know what you are experiencing.

Routines



Things may never get back to how they were, but getting back to some of your routines is helpful. Take your time in doing this. Take small steps to return to your routines. Some people may say things like 'get back on the bike' as soon as you can, but take small steps to returning to your normal activities such as work or driving.

Avoid alcohol and drugs



Drinking alcohol and using mind altering drugs may inhibit your mind and body's ability to recover. Avoid or minimise these in the first week or so.

Limit Media



Do what you can to help your body and mind to feel safe. Limit your exposure to traumatic news, movies, TV shows and games. Look for media that connects you to others, makes you laugh or encourages a sense of predictability and security such as an old familiar TV show. If the event you experienced is on the media limit how much exposure you give yourself and view with a friend.

Calm your mind and body



Intentionally slowing down your breathing, breathing into your belly and extending your exhale gives a sign to your nervous system that you are safe. Practising this breathing can be very helpful.

Exercise



If you don't have a physical injury, exercise such as walking, cycling or jogging can be a great way to release stress hormones that your body has produced and is producing. If you find your body shaking, don't worry, just let it shake the tension out.