

Healing After A Traumatic Event

A traumatic event in the workplace is an upsetting event and can set off a wide range of emotional reactions among employees. Although the effects vary from person to person, it's normal to have deep and sometimes unexpected feelings about the experience. It means that you're trying to come to terms with the incident as best you can.

Feelings to expect in the aftermath:

You may find yourself thinking or feeling things that are uncomfortable or upsetting to you. Here are some typical reactions to a traumatic event:

- **Fixating on what happened** – A preoccupation with the incident, like you just can't get it out of your mind.
- **Trouble sleeping** – Having a hard time getting to sleep or staying asleep or experiencing nightmares.
- **Feeling anxious or fearful**
- **Feeling unusually irritable or angry**
- **Unexpected emotions** – Experiencing bouts of crying; feeling depressed or "low".
- **Feeling guilty or helpless** – Unrealistic thoughts that you could have or should have done more to prevent the incident.
- **Fear of returning to work** – Feeling vulnerable and worried for your safety on the job.
- **Fixating on comforting family** – An overwhelming need to repeatedly reassure your family that you're safe.

Sometimes people who have been through a trauma experience a number of these responses in quick order. Such a jumbled mix of thoughts and feelings can be quite confusing and require some time to sort out and resolve.

What you can do to begin healing:

Remember, the reactions outlined above are essentially **normal** responses to a very out-of-the-ordinary event. Although these thoughts and feelings can be uncomfortable, you need to give yourself time and get some support to help you get through, and

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beyond, this stressful experience. Some things other employees have found useful to do and keep in mind:

- **Talk about it with work mates** – Let your manager and fellow employees know what you're feeling and how you're doing; they may be having similar issues and it helps to share.
- **Confide in family & close friends** – It can be healing to share your feelings with trusted family members and friends.
- **Try not to be hard on yourself** – Know that you couldn't have done anything to prevent the incident, and you did the best you could to preserve the safety of other employees and customers while it was happening.
- **Remember that time is a great healer** – The feelings and thoughts troubling you now really are temporary and will ease with every passing day. Getting back into a normal routine can help.

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