

Aftershocks...In Response to a Traumatic Event

What is a Traumatic Event? It's an event that is or is perceived as threatening to one's own or a close associate's life or physical integrity. Examples: War, disaster, car accident, rape, assault, operation, molestation, loss of significant other (child, spouse, parent). This can also include news of a family member being deployed.

You may have experienced a traumatic event upon learning that your loved one is deploying for a period of time. It is quite normal, for people to have a variety of reactions to this event, and some may experience aftershocks.

These reactions may appear hours, days, or even weeks or months later. You may experience only one or two of these reactions or you may have several. Remember, that these are normal reactions to abnormal events, and there are things that you can do to help the reactions pass more quickly.

Some of the aftershocks you may experience listed here:

Physical Aftershocks

- Fatigue and weakness
- Dizziness or fainting
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headaches or other pains
- Visual difficulties
- Muscle tremors or twitches
- Rapid heart rate
- Profuse sweating or chills

Cognitive Aftershocks

- Poor concentration
- Memory problems
- Poor decision making/problem solving
- Nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts and images
- Confusion or disorientation
- Disturbing thoughts
- Hyper-vigilance

Emotional Aftershocks

- Grief
- Anxiety or panic
- Fear and uncertainty
- Remorse or guilt
- Anger
- Sadness or depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability or agitation

Behavioral Aftershocks

- Emotional outbursts
- Increased startle reflex
- Pacing
- Change in sexual functions
- Withdrawal
- Inability to rest
- Alcohol consumption
- Pacing or tics

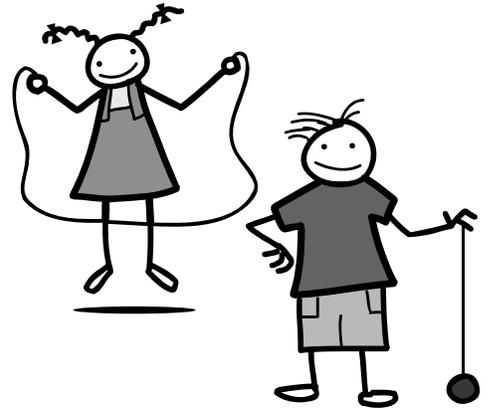
Things to Try

- Alternate periods of physical exercise with periods of relaxation
- Get plenty of rest
- Eat well balanced meals, even if you don't feel like it
- Take things one day at a time

- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams and flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them
- Structure your time – try to keep busy. Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Spend time with others
- Keep a journal. Write down your thought, feelings, and reactions
- Remember, you're normal and are having normal reactions
- Share your feelings with others. Talking with others is the most healing medicine
- Do the things that feel good to you
- Be kind to yourself
- Use your spiritual resources
- Have confidence in your ability to cope

Children and Trauma

In today's society, most children will have exposure to a traumatic event that has occurred. Children react in a variety of ways depending on their ages and understanding of the situation, and how their parents and other adults around them are reacting. Younger children are more likely to act out and regress to younger behavior patterns. Older children may display sadness, fear, frustration, and anger.



Here are some tips on how to help your children cope:

- Try to control your response. Even very young children will key in on how you are feeling or reacting
- Remind your children that your family is safe, and that the military and local law enforcement are doing everything they can to protect your family.
- Be careful with the TV. When you have the TV on, watch the news with your children and help them understand what is going on, based on their age and interest levels.
- Talk to other adults about your fears. You may be used to confiding in teenagers, but they do not have the life experience to know how to cope with stress as well as you do.
- Share your coping strategies with your children. Suggest that you all jog around the block, ride bikes, or play sports to relieve stress.
- Eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest/sleep
- Be a good example for your children
- Talk to your children. Invite them to share what they think or feel. Listen to their fears and reassure them. Remind younger children that it's the adult's job to protect them. Make sure children know that what is going on is not their fault.
- With children too young to express their feelings clearly, play with them. Draw pictures, build blocks and read books
- Return to your normal family routine as much as possible. Children are reassured by familiar routines and procedures.