



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.  
*Commissioner*

### How People React to Traumatic Events

Many people experience symptoms of stress in the aftermath of a traumatic event. These symptoms may affect your body and mind for a brief period. For most people, they subside after a few weeks. Here are some common, normal reactions

#### Emotional

- Shock
- Numbness
- Fear, anxiety and nervousness
- Panic
- Agitation, irritability and anger
- Uncertainty
- Guilt and self-doubt
- Denial
- Grief
- Sadness and depression
- Loneliness and isolation
- Helplessness
- Loss of interest in activities

#### Physical

- Fatigue, exhaustion, weakness
- Headaches
- Visual problems
- Dizziness
- Chills and profuse sweating
- Twitches and muscular tremors
- Grinding teeth
- Rapid heart rate
- Chest pains
- Difficulty breathing
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Worsening of existing medical conditions

#### Behavioral

- Withdrawal
- Acting out
- Being suspicious and hyper-alert
- Restlessness and pacing
- Outbursts and frequent crying
- Argumentativeness
- Increased conflicts at home and work
- Impaired work performance
- Excessive activity
- Increased smoking or substance use
- Eating less or overeating
- Increased or decreased sexual drive
- Avoidance of reminders of the event

#### Cognitive

- Feeling confused
- Blaming others
- Being more or less alert
- Poor attention and concentration
- Memory problems and impaired thinking
- Difficulty in making decisions and solving problems
- Having nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive thoughts

#### Spiritual

- Loss of meaning and purpose
- Questioning one's basic beliefs
- Withdrawal from place of worship

#### Where to find help

Consider seeking professional help if your symptoms worsen or persist. Anyone who needs help coping with stressful events can call LifeNet, a 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline. LifeNet's mental-health professionals can offer help in a variety of languages: English 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638); Spanish 1-877-AYUDESE (1-877-298-3373); Asian languages 1-877-990-8585, Deaf/Hearing Impaired (TTY): 1-212-982-5284. You can also visit LifeNet online, at [www.mhaofnyc.org](http://www.mhaofnyc.org).