

To help yourself, you can.....structure your life as much as possible. Make small daily decisions to feel more in control.

...avoid making major life decisions during this difficult time. This probably is not a good time to move, change jobs, or add more pressure.

...allow yourself to experience uncomfortable recurring feelings.

...talk about your feelings. Make the time to meet with a friend or family member who can and will support you.

...do nice things for yourself. This won't fix anything but it might lift your spirits for a little while.

...limit your use of alcohol and drugs. If you need help to sleep, talk with your doctor.

...increase your physical exercise.

...know that there is no "right" way to feel. Whatever your feelings are, they are normal, appropriate reactions to an abnormal situation.

As a friend or family member, you can... listen carefully and spend time with the person. Reassure them that they are safe now and that their feelings are normal. Tell them you are sorry this happened to them.

...avoid offering easy answers or giving advice.

...help with specific tasks or errands. This can be helpful since people feel unfocused and unable to make decisions.

...avoid blaming the person or saying, "you're lucky it wasn't worse." It is important to support them through this difficult time.

...stay involved in the person's recovery. Ask how you can best support them and help them find out what services are available to them.

...remember that each person experiences trauma differently. Be understanding of the different ways each person copes and the different pace at which each person heals.

Community Resources

Boulder Police Department

Victim Services	303-441-4048
	303-441-3391
Records.....	303-441-3300
Coroner's Office	303-441-3535
District Attorney's Office	
Victim Witness.....	303-441-3700
Victim Compensation	303-682-6801
Mental Health Department	303-443-8500
Emergency Psychiatric Unit	303-447-1665
Legal Services.....	303-449-7575
TRU Community Care.....	303-449-7740
(Formerly HospiceCare)	
SPAN	303-444-2424
MESA.....	303-443-7300
Social Services.....	303-441-1000
Emergency Family Assistance .	303-442-3042

Emotional Responses To Trauma



Victim Services Unit
Boulder Police Department
1805 33rd Street
Boulder, CO 80301
Phone: 303-441-4048
Phone: 303-441-3391

The initial shock following a crime, sudden death, accident or other trauma is a painful reality for everyone involved. Many times, right after a horrible or tragic event a person is in shock and may feel frozen or numb and may not be able to remember simple things like their own telephone number or where they left their car. Often the person may not even believe what has happened. It is also common to have no particular feelings at all about the event for a while. Eventually, even though the event is over, it is normal for a person to experience strong emotional or physical reactions. Sometimes the reactions appear immediately after the event or they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before stress reactions are felt.

People are often surprised that reactions to trauma are more intense and can last longer than they expected. It may take weeks, months and in some cases, years to feel healed. Many people will get through this period on their own with the help and support of friends and family. Often, however, well-meaning family and friends might push a loved one to get over it before they are ready. Sometimes the traumatic event is so disturbing or painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be helpful. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It means that the event is just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves

Common Reactions to Trauma

-shock and disbelief, numbness
-having unwanted memories
-anxiety or panicky feelings
-feeling “lost” or “out of it”
-being near tears much of the time
-increased irritability
-sleep disturbances
-loss of appetite
-depression
-headache, nausea, or physical pain
-disruption of family life
-withdrawal
-loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
-flashbacks, recurring nightmares
-guilt
-confusion, difficulty concentrating

Children’s Reactions to Trauma

Children might react to trauma with feelings of confusion, anger, guilt and fear. Frequently they will regress in behavior, i.e., wanting to become a baby again and wetting the bed. They also may become irritable, clingy and cranky. Children might have trouble sleeping and may seem to need more attention and comfort than usual. They may feel unsafe and may not understand what has happened, which could cause them to feel frightened and frustrated. It is not uncommon for children to have nightmares, which could begin as nightmares of the event, but could become more generalized like dreams of monsters. Children will commonly feel afraid after a traumatic loss of familiar people and surroundings.

It is helpful for children to talk about their experiences, draw pictures or play out events. They may need to do this over and over because children will understand only small parts of the traumatic event at one time. Giving children hugs and attention encourages them to talk and express their feelings. This will help them to get through the experience in a healthy way.