

Warning Signs of Trauma-Related Stress

by the American Psychological Association

Individuals who have experienced a traumatic event oftentimes suffer psychological stress related to the incident. In most instances, these are normal reactions to abnormal situations. Individuals who feel they are unable to regain control of their lives, or who experience the following symptoms for more than a month, should consider seeking outside professional mental health assistance. The American Red Cross is now working with mental health professionals trained in trauma. For information or a referral, contact the local American Red Cross chapter or the American Psychological Association at 202/336-5800.

- Recurring thoughts or nightmares about the event.
- Having trouble sleeping or changes in appetite.
- Experiencing anxiety and fear, especially when exposed to events or situations reminiscent of the trauma.
- Being on edge, being easily startled or becoming overly alert.
- Feeling depressed, sad and having low energy.
- Experiencing memory problems including difficulty in remembering aspects of the trauma.
- Feeling "scattered" and unable to focus on work or daily activities. Having difficulty making decisions.
- Feeling irritable, easily agitated, or angry and resentful.
- Feeling emotionally "numb", withdrawn, disconnected or different from others.
- Spontaneously crying, feeling a sense of despair and hopelessness.
- Feeling extremely protective of, or fearful for, the safety of loved ones.
- Not being able to face certain aspects of the trauma, and avoiding activities, places, or even people that remind you of the event.

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