

Information for staff following a traumatic incident at work

After an incident at work it is normal to experience stress reactions that may continue for some weeks. An incident may arouse powerful and upsetting feelings and coming to terms with an incident can take time.

How you might feel immediately after the event – first hours or days

Many people feel shock, feeling stunned dazed or numb. You can also feel cut off from your emotions and what is going on around you.

You can also find it difficult to accept that the incident has happened and behave as if it hasn't happened.

How you might feel in the first few weeks following a traumatic incident

- Tearful and sad
- Fear and anxiety
- Feeling numb or dreamlike
- Unpleasant thoughts and images about the event
- Nightmares
- Sleep difficulties and tiredness
- Reluctance to discuss the event or wanting to talk about it all the time
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Wanting to avoid people, places and activities that remind you of the incident
- Feeling guilty or to blame for some aspect of the incident
- Concentration and memory problems

What you can do that is helpful

Spend time with your family, friends and colleagues who may be able to support you through this difficult time. Try to re-establish your normal routines and be patient with yourself as you learn to live with what has happened.

Take good care of yourself by eating well, taking regular exercise and try to keep to your normal sleep routine.

Talk things over when you feel ready to do so and don't worry if you get upset or cry whilst doing this.

What is not helpful

Strong feelings are normal after an incident. Don't bottle them up; just let yourself talk when you feel ready. Avoid alcohol and drugs, although they numb the feelings they can stop you from coming to terms with what has happened.

How People at Work Employee Assistance can help

We can help by supporting you through the trauma. We can work with your team as a whole or offer individual therapy. You can contact us at any time on 020 3286 1545.