

## TRAUMATIC EVENTS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a traumatic event (an injury, loss of someone you cared about, or other type of emotionally overwhelming event). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or days or weeks later. In some cases, months may pass before the symptoms appear. Occasionally, no symptoms or problems occur.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular traumatic event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

Here are some very common signs and symptoms of a stress reaction after a traumatic event:

<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>THINKING</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL</b>
Nausea	Slowed thinking	Anxiety
Upset stomach	Hard to make decisions	Fear
Tremors	Hard to problem solve	Guilt
Chills	Confusion	Grief
Diarrhea	Disorientation	Depression
Rapid heart beat	Concentration problems	Feeling lost
Headaches	Memory problems	Feeling numb
Sleep disturbance	Intrusive images	Irritability
Headaches	Intrusive thoughts	Anger
Fatigue	Frustrated	Feeling isolated

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the above, it is important to remember that these are **NORMAL** reactions, of a **NORMAL** person, who is trying to cope with an **ABNORMAL** event.

There are some things you can do to help speed up the recovery process. Sometimes just knowing that what we are going through is a normal reaction can help, but usually it is important to talk to others, especially those who have gone through this experience or similar ones. Talking about it helps the most.

## **HELPFUL HINTS FOR RECOVERY**

Trying some of the following hints may help to alleviate the emotional pain associated with a traumatic event. For the next few days anyway you should consider eating/drinking less caffeine, salt, sugar, alcohol and eating/drinking more wholesome foods, vitamins B and C. Give your body a chance to recover too.

### **For Yourself**

- try to get more rest
- talk to friends
- do not be alone for a while
- intrusive thoughts/images are normal-don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- maintain as normal a schedule
- eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it)
- try to keep a reasonable level of activity
- fight against boredom
- physical activity is helpful
- reestablish a normal schedule as soon as possible but don't push too hard
- express your feelings as they arise
- talk to people who love you

### **For Family Members and Friends**

- listen carefully
- spend time with your loved one
- offer your assistance and a listening ear especially if they don't ask
- reassure them that they are safe
- help them with every day tasks as possible but take breaks like cleaning, cooking, children
- give them some private time
- don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" they are not consoled by this statement. Instead tell them you are sorry this happened to them and you want to help.
- don't be surprised if your loved one only wants to talk about the incident with their colleagues as long as they are talking.

If the symptoms described above are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, the person may need professional help. The person or family members may contact someone they know or call the High School at 655-2583 for assistance.

The information on this sheet is taken from the work of Jeffrey Mitchel.