

What is Trauma?

Trauma is something that can be experienced and result from a threat to one's life, a threat to one's physical, and psychological integrity. The criteria for Trauma is known to impact on one's Behaviour, Emotional state and how an individual will respond to an event or incident will vary. A Trauma response individual variation may result from an accumulative response to simultaneous events, a new event, grief or a very severe attack that has caused physical, injury, or fear.

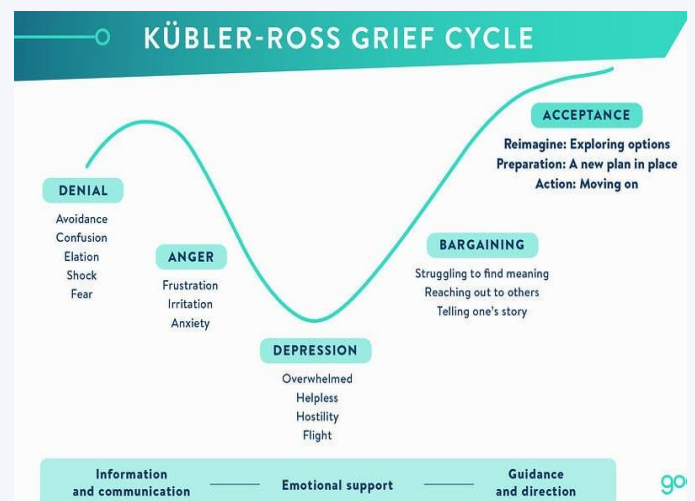
Below are some examples of **Vicarious Trauma**, which a secondary exposure to trauma either through visual or verbal means.

- Emotional numbing
- Social withdrawal
- Work-related nightmares
- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Loss of sense of spirituality
- More negative view of the world
- Reduced sense of respect for your clients
- Loss of enjoyment of sexual activity
- No time or energy for yourself
- Feeling that you can't discuss work with family or friends.
- Reduced productivity & motivation
- Finding that you talk about work all the time (can't escape)
- Sense of disconnection from your loved ones
- Increased fear for safety of children or loved one, and yourself.
- Sense of cynicism or pessimism
- Increased illness or fatigue
- Greater problems with boundaries
- Difficulties making decisions.
- Lowered self-esteem, lowered sense of competence in your work.
- Less time spent reflecting on your experiences.



Typical responses may also include Grief and Loss as depicted below.

Stages of Grief:



- increased anxiety, panic attacks
- troubled or distressed when exposed to traumatic news or events.
- irrational worry about others
- feelings of abandonment, isolation, or powerlessness
- feeling a lack of control
- numbness or mood swings
- feelings of depression, sadness, guilt, blame, anger, frustration fear, and irritability.
- recurring thoughts/dreams of the death
- being absorbed by what's happened, continually asking 'why?'
- confused or slowed thinking, memory difficulties.
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions.

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What can you do?

- Support through listening and either accessing EAP or other support services depending on the exposure: Accident, natural disaster, sexual assault, Domestic Violence, death, personal physical attack.
- Connect the individual to support wither immediately or provide the Information.
- Follow-up with the person

Ways of responding to trauma:

Acknowledging that you have experienced a traumatic event is helpful to your recovery. Consider trying some of the following to help with your recovery process:

- Allow yourself time to be alone, it is an understandable reaction to a distressing experience. Alternatively, if you are feeling alone, isolated or your mood is not improving, try spending time with friends or family.
- Express your thoughts and feelings in ways that feel natural to you – talking to friends / family, writing down thoughts or listening to music.
- Give yourself time to recover. You do not have to be in control of your life straight away.
- Rest your body and mind. If you are having trouble sleeping, working or doing things in general – try to do something calming instead, then try again.
- Take care of your health as best as you can – eat healthy, stay hydrated and try getting some fresh air.



- Be aware of your alcohol, drugs (prescription or recreational) and stimulant consumption - including caffeine. These may further agitate your body when it is already under stress and can interfere with the recovery process, causing additional problems later on.
- Exercise or go for a walk – it can help burn stressful energy and assist in calming your body.
- Take care when driving, cooking or undertaking activities that require concentration. Trauma can affect your concentration and ability to focus.
- Resume your normal routine and return to work only when you feel you are able. Consider reducing your hours if it's an option.
- Hold off on making major life decisions until you feel better. Smaller, day-to-day decisions can help to restore a sense of control, improve your confidence and thinking.

It is important to have the support of family friends when experiencing trauma, especially when it is combined with grief.

You should consider seeking out some professional help if:

- **you feel very distressed or that your life is significantly disrupted.**
- **you are thinking of harming yourself or others.**



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