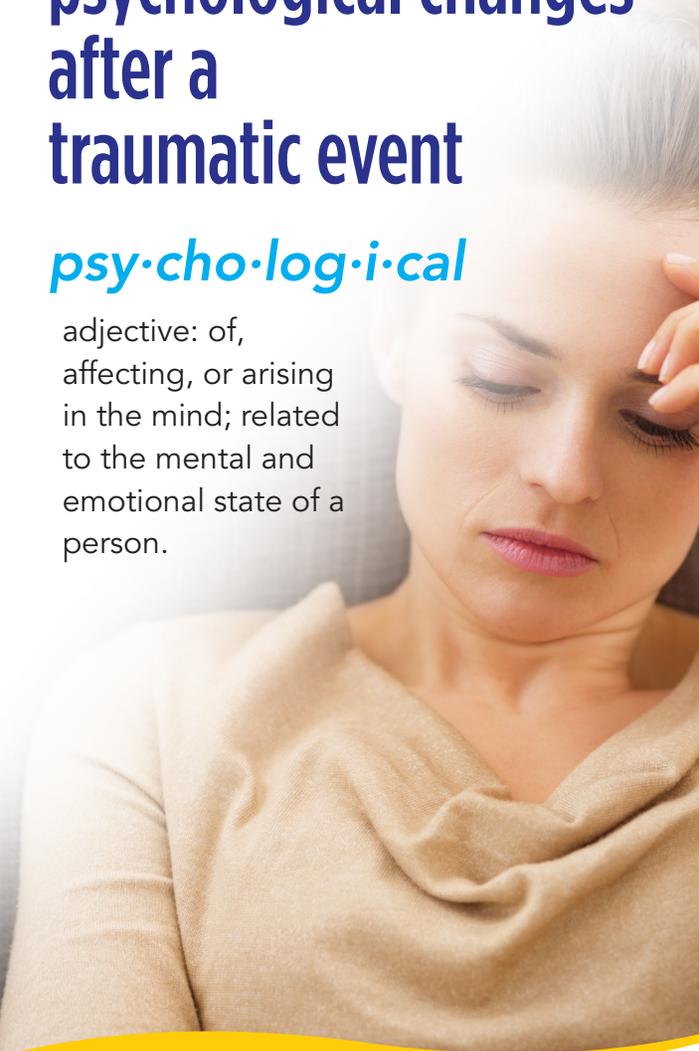


How to identify psychological changes after a traumatic event

psy·cho·log·i·cal

adjective: of, affecting, or arising in the mind; related to the mental and emotional state of a person.



What is a traumatic event?

A traumatic event is an experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress or harm. It can also be an event, or series of events, that causes moderate to severe stress reactions, involving physical injury or illness, anxiety, fear or pain. Following a traumatic event, some people may experience the following:

Grief

Grief is the experience of loss. Some people associate grief with the death of an important person. However, people can experience grief after any important loss that affects their life.

Signs & Symptoms

People experience grief in many different ways. Some may feel shocked, sad, angry, scared, or anxious. Some feel numb or have a hard time feeling emotions at all.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a biological mechanism designed to protect us against dangerous and stressful situations. A little anxiety is quite natural.

However, people struggling with anxiety disorders report a wide variety of fears, such as fear of losing control.

Signs & Symptoms

Irrational and excessive fear, apprehensive and tense feelings, difficulty managing daily tasks, anxious thoughts (e.g., "I'm losing control"), or excessive physical reactions relative to the context (e.g., heart racing and feeling short of breath in response to a specific situation).

Depression

Depression is more than unhappiness. It is a complex mood disorder caused by various factors, including genetic predisposition, personality, stress and brain chemistry.

Signs & Symptoms

The main symptom of depression is a sad or desperate state of mind, or a sad, despairing mood that is mostly present and impairs the person's performance at work, at school or in social relationships. Other symptoms of depression include changes in appetite and weight, sleep problems, loss of interest in hobbies, withdrawal from family and friends, feelings of hopelessness, irritability, fatigue, trouble concentrating, crying easily and thoughts of suicide.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) involves exposure to trauma involving death or the threat of death, serious injury, or sexual violence.

Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin within three months of the trauma, although there may be a delay of months, or even years before the symptoms appear. The traumatic experience is repeatedly relived through intrusive memories, distressing dreams and flashbacks. Some people may experience depression, nervousness and sleep

Tips for maintaining your mental health

- Connect with caring and supportive people;
- Give yourself time, there is no normal grieving period;
- Let yourself feel sadness, anger, or whatever you need to feel;
- Talk with friends or write in a journal;
- Offer support to others who are grieving. Reaching out may be helpful to your own recovery;
- Take care of your physical health;
- Reach out for help.

Tips for helping others maintain their mental health

- Talk about the traumatic or impactful events. Sharing thoughts, memories, and stories can be helpful;
- Be honest with young people about what has happened (with age-appropriate descriptions), and encourage them to

share their feelings, as children can experience the same challenges as adults and may require professional support;

- Help your loved ones connect with support services if they experience a lot of difficulties.

Resources available

- Family physician
- Employee Assistance Program (available through most employers)
- Addiction/Community Mental Health Centre

Community Addiction and Mental Health contact information:

Bathurst	547-2110
Campbellton	789-2440
Caraquet	726-2030
Edmundston	735-2070
Fredericton	453-2132
Grand Falls	475-2440
Grand Manan	662-7023
Kedgwick	284-3431
Miramichi	778-6111
Moncton (Horizon Health Network)	856-2444
Moncton (Vitalité Health Network)	862-4144
Perth-Andover	273-4701
Richibucto	523-7620
Sackville	856-2444
Saint John	658-3737
Shediac	533-2816
Shippagan	336-3367
St. Stephen	466-7380
St.-George	755-4044
Sussex	432-2090
Tracadie-Sheila	394-3760
Woodstock	325-4419

CHIMO provincial crisis phone line:
1 (800) 667-5005

Canadian Mental Health Association:
www.cmha.ca