

Common Responses to High Stress and/or Trauma

Self Test: Put a check beside the responses that describe you.

After experiencing a traumatic event, or in response to cumulative stressors, it is common -- and normal -- to experience a wide range of emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual reactions. These responses may appear immediately after the event(s) *or some time later*. **These are normal reactions to abnormal situations.** The following are some of the most common responses:

Emotional	Cognitive (Thinking)	Behavioral (doing)	Physical	Spiritual	Societal Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Terror • Anxiety • Panic / Paranoia • Anger / Rage • Apprehension • Depression • Vengefulness • Shame • Guilt • Sadness • Grief • Emotional shock • Emotional outbursts • Loss of emotional control • Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness • Feeling numb • Irritability • COURAGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Nightmares • Hyper-vigilance • Suspiciousness • Flashbacks • Overly sensitive • Difficulty making decisions, spacey • Poor concentration • Memory problems • Shortened attention span • Critical, blaming • Poor problem solving and abstract thinking • Preoccupied with the event(s): inability to recall all or parts of the event • Disoriented to person, place or time • Heightened or lowered awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal • Self harm • Overwork • Antisocial acts • Inability to rest, pacing • Hyper-alertness • Erratic movement • Suspiciousness • Emotional outbursts • Change in speech patterns • Increased alcohol/drug use • Avoiding places related to the event • Difficulty writing or talking • Impaired sexual functioning • Loss or increase of appetite • Feeling clumsy • Domestic Violence • CARING FOR OTHERS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirst/dry mouth • Twitches • Vomiting • Weakness • Chest pain • High BP • Rapid heart rate • Muscle tremors • Visual difficulties • Nausea/diarrhea • Shallow breathing • Dizziness or faintness • Chills or sweating • Easily startled • Fatigue • Changes in appetite • Sleep disturbances • Headaches • Grinding teeth • Inability to rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptiness • Loss of meaning • Doubt • Feeling unforgiven • Martyrdom, feeling punished • Looking for magic • Loss of direction • Cynicism • Apathy • Needing to “prove” self • Alienated • Mistrust • Crisis of faith • GROWTH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathy • Silence/impaired communication • Aggressive behavior • Isolation • Lack of empathy • Denial • Low energy/low productivity • Inflexibility • High rates of alcoholism, drug abuse • High rates of (untreated) mental health issues (depression, sexual dysfunction, etc) • High rates of stress-related health issues (and medication use) • Intergenerational transmission of pain • SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WISDOM