

Children and Young People

Children and young people are as likely to be as affected as adults and they may have similar experiences. Possible reactions are as follows:

- Feeling unwell. Young children in particular may complain of aching limbs, colds, infections, headaches and tummy upsets
- Some young people or children may become more fearful, be reluctant to go to school and young children especially may be frightened of the dark. They may become anxious about being separated from their parents
- Younger children in particular may start to bite their nails, pick themselves or twiddle their hair, begin to stammer, wet the bed or regress to an early stage of development, perhaps using baby talk
- Eating difficulties are also common. Some children / young people over eat whilst others may lose their appetite
- Children may 're-play' the traumatic event in their games
- Concentration difficulties— feeling tired or lethargic
- As with adults, young people may turn to alcohol or drugs

These reactions are understandable and usually reduce over time. Parents can help their children by both providing information and reassurance. Like adults, children cope surprisingly well in the long term.

What can I do that's helpful?

- Take each day at a time
- Do things that make you feel safe and secure
- Be patient with yourself- it may take weeks or months to feel that you and your life are back to normal
- Try to re-establish your usual routines such as going to work and school
- Spend time with family, friends and others who may be able to help you through this difficult time
- Give reassurance to children to help them feel safe and to talk about their fears and worries. You can help a young person to regain their sense of control by setting short term goals and targets
- Take good care of yourself physically; eat well, exercise regularly, reduce alcohol and drug use and get enough sleep.
- Talk it over when you are ready, but don't worry if you get upset or cry while you think or talk about what happened
- Take extra care. After a major incident or event, people are more likely to have accidents

What isn't helpful

- Bottling up your feelings
- Alcohol and drugs. Whilst these can numb your feelings, they can also stop you from coming to terms with what has happened or cause more problems later

Do I need professional help?

Most people who have encountered a major incident find that they get better over time. However, if you are still having significant difficulties in managing your day to day life after a month, you might need some help.

The same advice applies to your children. They too, may benefit from help if their feelings and behaviour are a worry to you a month after the event. It is helpful to seek advice if this is the case.

Where can I get help?

- * **Your GP**
- * **Stockport Educational Psychology Service 0161 474 3870**
- * **Samaritans Stockport 0161 432 1221**
- * **Beacon counselling 0161 285 1827**
- * **Childline 0800 1111**
- * **Healthy Young Minds (CAMHS) 0161 419 2050**

Coping Following Involvement in a Major Incident

Often, major events make us feel that life is unfair and unsafe. Looking back afterwards, and despite our feelings and problems at the time, it is clear that most people do cope well and recover without long term problems.

What you have seen and heard is likely to have an effect on you, in the short term, even if you have not been injured. Coping can be difficult. Everyone is different and each person has his or her own feelings afterwards.

What has happened can cause strong feelings, but usually they settle in time.

People who are directly involved or who lose loved ones are the people who are likely to be most affected. However, witnesses, friends and relatives may have reactions too

Immediately afterwards you might feel:

- Stunned, dazed or numb
- Cut off from what is going on around you
- Unable to accept what has happened
- That it has not really happened

In the following weeks you might experience:

- Tears and sadness
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Numbness or dreaminess
- Flashbacks
- Problems with concentration / memory
- Difficulties with sleeping / fatigue
- Nightmares
- Feeling less confident and sometimes help-less
- Reduced energy and reduced appetite.
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Increased use of alcohol or prescription/ non prescription drugs
- Guilt about the incident
- Headaches and other aches and pains
- Elation about surviving

- Feelings of reluctance to discuss the event—or wanting to talk about it all the time
- Wanting to avoid people, places or activities that remind you of the event (and this may avoid travelling on public transport)