

Apparently this was given to all the Swiss police during the G8 protest in Eivan. And we have happily recycled it, for public use!

What do you have to know ?

Some out of the ordinary situations or events can cause a trauma, exposing the concerned people to an intense suffering, to an experience full of emotion

During your life, or your professional activity, you can live some shocking situations or painful experiences that threaten or aggress your physical or psychological integrity, or those of your dearest.

These situations or most of the time violent, unexpected and/or causing anxiety too. We call them critical incidents

it can be for instance :

Sexual abuse, rape, an accident, aggression, theft, catastrophe, war, torture, fire, being taken hostage, suicide, domestic violence.

What is a psychological trauma ?

the trauma can be defined as the effect of an **abnormal event** during which your psychological defenses have been overwhelmed. We can compare this experience to an **emotional injury**. By its suddenness or intensity, the situation forces you to protect yourself. *This "injury " can be more or less deep and touch a more or less sensitive point of your personality.*

A result can be a **sharp stress**, that is to say so intense that it's later going to trigger a series of **reactions**. Like the event, these reactions can be as surprising as extreme, but they can also remain unnoticed. Anyway, these appearances are the sign that your body and mind react. In the **beginning**, it is important to be tolerant with yourself and take care of yourself. The process of recovery that naturally comes will be greatly assisted by this.

Your reactions should gradually decrease during the first weeks after the incident. Pay attention to these and observe their evolution. The experienced event will later on leave a "scar", with importance is depending on the extent of the experienced and of the support you have received. You get anyway transformed afterwards.

The réactions

In practical terms, the sharp reaction can be materialized by one or several physical, behavioural or emotional signs, that is to say :

Physical symptoms : trembling, dizziness, cold sweat, muscle pain, tiredness...

A State of hypervigilance that implies sleeping troubles, unrest and excessive reactions like jumping up suddenly, difficulties to concentrate and keeping attention, irritability and fit of anger

Repetitive and intrusive memories of the event that come in the form of thoughts, dreams or flash backs (feeling of living the trauma again). The contrary effect can be an inability to remember an important aspect of the trauma.

Behaviours of evasion that expresses itself by efforts of not thinking of the event, a tendency to avoid situations, places or people recalling the memory of the experienced choc.

Feeling of powerlessness that generates guiltiness, depreciation, fear, anger... Experience of loss involving a feeling of sadness, gloominess and a tendency to isolate, to avoid participating in social activities.

Theses reactions are human ! They are on a par with the experienced situation.

When to consult a specialist ?

Do not hesitate to consult or reconsult a specialist if

- You are anxious and you need more information.
- Your life is excessively perturbed by these appearances.
- You notice that after a month your réactions tend to persist or even increase

This specialist can guide you and help with the healing of your emotional injury, thereby avoiding some eventual complications on the longer term. He will maybe propose you to do a briefing.

The Debriefing

It is a preventive operation (usually in between 24 hours and a week after the critical incident) that consist of in particular in making a structured and detailed story of the facts, thoughts and emotions experienced during the event. This technique of discussion can be used for a single person or for a group, it has to be guided by a trained person.

What do you need to know ?

For yourself..

Above all, don't stay alone and dare to talk to people you trust. This is the best way to face the situation, even though you feel that no one can understand you. Sharing these experiences, you will little by little soothe the emotional load and distress that goes with these kind of events.

Your reactions are human and normal. Accept theses appearances of stress without judging them and give yourself time.

Try to understand the impact of this event on yourself, even if it is painful to talk about it again. Don't try to make it banal neither to turn the page without coming back on what you

experienced. Your open-mindedness and your honesty towards your emotions are of precious help.

Take care of yourself, and find yourself some moments to de-stress (a hot bath, relaxation...) by leisure activity and physical activity. Find again your usual rhythm of life. Finally, if you feel that all this is not enough, avoid turning to alcohol or medicine. Rather take the option to go to a specialist. He'll give you information and the possibility to benefit from suitable support.

For a people close..

Your relative cannot forget. Without forcing them, be able to listen, even if you can't understand what they experienced. Your patience and attention are the best resource. To their eyes, what they experienced is unique. Avoid making it casual and make comparisons with similar situations. They are the only one to know the importance that this experience has for them.

If they are feeling alone. Your careful and discreet presence, your capacity to listen and your support are the best way of being near.

They maybe anxious of their own reactions. Help them to accept them, reminding them that these appearances are normal after such an event. Don't judge them.

Your relative tries to find a feeling of continuity and unity. They feel changed. Take care not to excessively change your behavior towards them. They had a long way to make into their head. The trauma is an internal disruption that can take some time to be assimilated. Have trust in their capabilities and don't ask them to "get over this" too fast.