

SUPPORT AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

TIPS



ESSENTIAL FOR CARERS

OFFER SUPPORT AFTER A TRAUMATIC OR DISTRESSING EVENT

After a traumatic experience, supporting a friend or family member can make a big difference. Here's how you can help:

1. **Be Available:** Let them know you're there for them and make time to spend with them. Avoid rushing them to "move on" before they're ready. Your presence can provide comfort.
2. **Validate Feelings:** Understand that they may be feeling irritable, depressed, angry, or frightened. Don't take it personally. Reassure them that their reactions are normal and will lessen with time.
3. **Offer Practical Help:** Assist with daily tasks like housework, grocery shopping, or childcare. Practical support can ease their burden during a challenging time.
4. **Encourage Self-Care:** Advocate for healthy habits like eating well, avoiding substances, and maintaining regular sleep patterns. Taking care of themselves can aid in their recovery.
5. **Respect Their Space:** Sometimes, they may need time alone. Respect their need for solitude while letting them know you're available whenever they need you.
6. **Non-Judgmental Support:** Be a supportive listener without judgment. Let them express themselves freely, knowing they have a safe space to do so.
7. **Encourage Routine:** Suggest maintaining regular daily routines and habits. Predictability can provide a sense of stability during a turbulent time.

By offering understanding, practical assistance, and encouragement, you can support your loved one as they navigate their healing journey.

TALKING ABOUT THE TRAUMA CAN BE IMPORTANT

- Let them talk about the event, staying calm and attentive.
- Respect their need for space; don't push them to talk.
- Reassure them of your care and willingness to understand.
- Avoid getting upset if they feel misunderstood.
- Ensure they have other support options.
- Discuss decisions together, but don't impose choices.
- Consider waiting before making decisions to soon after the trauma.

WHAT TO AVOID:

- Don't shy away from discussing the event openly.
- Avoid assuming you know their feelings; everyone responds uniquely.
- Skip clichés like 'look on the bright side' and instead encourage reflection on positives.
- Refrain from judgment; acceptance and understanding are crucial.
- Don't rush their recovery process; healing takes time.
- Avoid pressuring them into seeking professional help prematurely; timing matters for effective treatment.

PRACTICALLY:

Help them to relax and get involved in activities

Relaxation and fun are important recovery tools, some suggestions include:

- Try to involve the person in physical activity, such as walking or swimming. Exercise burns off stress chemicals, reduces muscle tension and encourages better sleep.
- While the person needs to spend some time alone, help them to strike a balance. Socialising – even low-key events such as sitting around with friends – can help to reduce stress levels.
- Laughter is a wonderful antidote to stress. Find ways to help them to smile or laugh.

If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call Lifeline **13 11 14**.

