

Where do I find help?

You can find help via your GP. Make an appointment and discuss the difficulties you are experiencing. Alternatively, you may wish to contact a helpline for advice:

- **Disaster Action** – is a charity whose members are survivors of, or have been bereaved through, a disaster. They share common experience and provide support and guidance to those affected by disasters. Telephone: 01483 799 066. (telephone / answerphone). www.disasteraction.org.uk
- **The Samaritans** – will refer callers to local branches offering a 24-hour service to all those going through a personal crisis. Telephone: 116 123 (24 hour helpline). www.samaritans.org.uk
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** – offers a one-to-one support service for adults and children, via telephone and face-to-face. National helpline: 0808 808 1677 (Monday - Friday, 9.30am to 5pm). www.cruse.org.uk email: helpline@cruse.org.uk
- **Hope Again** – Hope Again is Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people. Email: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk to a trained volunteer. If you want to talk to someone directly, call the FREE phone helpline on 0808 808 1677 (Monday - Friday, 9.30am to 5pm). www.hopeagain.org.uk
- **The Compassionate Friends** – run by bereaved parents and their families. Offering understanding, support and encouragement to others after the death of a child or children. Telephone: 0345 123 2304 (lines open 10am to 4pm and 7pm to 10pm) – phones are always answered by a bereaved parent. www.tcf.org.uk

- **Assist Trauma Care** – offers telephone counseling and support to individuals and families in the aftermath of a trauma. Telephone: 01788 560800 (Helpline) (answerphone) or complete a web-based contact form on the following web link. www.assisttraumacare.org.uk
- **Child Bereavement UK** – offers comfort to those who have lost a child of any age and in any circumstance through a telephone support network. Telephone: 0800 0288840. www.childbereavementuk.org
- **NHS Choices** – for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) practical advice and information. www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/pages/introduction.aspx
- **STISH** – a website for online information and advice only. www.stish.org

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

NSFT PALS provides confidential advice, information and support, helping you to answer any questions you have about our services or about any health matters.



If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or a different language, please contact PALS and we will do our best to help.
Email: PALS@nsft.nhs.uk
or call PALS Freephone: 0800 279 7257

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust values and celebrates the diversity of all the communities we serve. We are fully committed to ensuring that all people have equality of opportunity to access our service, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership or social and economic status.



Trust Headquarters

Hellesdon Hospital
Drayton High Road
Norwich
NR6 5BE

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Advice for persons affected by a major incident

Plus contact details of organisations that offer help and support

Advice for persons affected by a major incident

If you, a family member or friend has been involved in a major incident, you may experience reactions that affect your feelings and behaviour in the days and months ahead. This information is intended to assist you to recognise the signs and help you to understand where and how you can access appropriate and professional support.

People who are directly involved in a major incident, or traumatic event, are the people who are most likely to be affected, but witnesses to events where people have lost their lives, may also have strong feelings.

In such cases, it is normal to experience a number of stress reactions that may continue for some weeks. These reactions are normal, understandable and usually reduce gradually over time.

It is normal to experience shock immediately after the event. This may make you feel numb, dazed or stunned. You may feel remote or cut off from what is going on around you.

Typically people find it difficult to accept what has happened and to behave as if it hasn't happened at all. Over the next few days you may find that these feelings gradually fade and other reactions may take their place. Follow-on reactions may include feeling tearful, sad, frightened, or feeling numb, or as if you are in a dream. Difficulty sleeping and nightmares are also common, as are feelings of anger, anxiety or restlessness or a reluctance to discuss the event or repeatedly 'go through it'.

Feeling helpless, or having unpleasant thoughts and vivid memories, as if the event is actually happening again, can be expected.

You may feel you want to avoid anything that reminds you of the event, or lose interest in activities you used to enjoy. Loss of concentration and memory are common symptoms, along with suffering from tiredness, headaches and even aches and pains.

Young people may become unsettled in their behaviors, and act out of character, being either demanding and clingy or more aggressive or fearful than usual.

What can I do?

Take one day at a time. It is important to establish a sense of safety and security. It would be helpful to:

- **Give yourself time** – it may take weeks or months to learn to cope with what has happened
- **Regain your life** – start to begin working on immediate personal and family priorities to help you and your loved ones regain some sense of hope, purpose and self-esteem. Try to focus on what's important today
- **Know people are here for you** – don't be scared to ask for support through this difficult time from family, friends, and peers, religious or social groups that may be able to help
- **Connect with others involved with the incident** – you may find it helpful to spend time with others who have been through the same or similar experiences as you and to go to memorial services or funerals. Don't forget you are not alone

- **Take care of yourself** – eat well, exercise regularly, and reduce alcohol and / or drug use and try to get enough sleep. This will help to reduce stress and prevent physical illness
- **Avoid street drugs and excessive alcohol** – this can help numb your feelings but can stop you from coming to terms with what has happened
- **Try to relax** – take time out for yourself. Do things you know help you to relax – listening to music, gardening etc
- **Talk it over** – when you feel ready and comfortable to do so. Don't worry or be embarrassed if you become emotional while doing this
- **Be careful** – particularly when driving and around your home – after a trauma people are more likely to have accidents
- **Not bottle it up** – don't avoid talking about what happened; strong feelings are normal and bottling them up will make you feel worse. Let yourself talk and don't worry if you cry
- **Avoid any major life changes** – your judgment may not be at its best and you may make decisions that you later regret

How would I decide if I need professional help?

Most people who have encountered a traumatic event find that their symptoms subside over time. Reactions and recovery times vary for different people; however, if your symptoms do not improve over time and continue to concern you (for example, because they are causing difficulties in your relationships or in your work) it may be beneficial to seek professional support.