

Supporting others after a traumatic event



Traumatic events involve situations that are either life-threatening or have the potential for serious injury, such as motor a vehicle accident or near miss, workplace accidents, physical or sexual assault, or disasters.

After a potentially traumatic event many people will experience strong feelings of fear, sadness, guilt, anger or grief. These feelings will usually become less intense after a few weeks, and the support of family, friends and workmates is especially important during this time.

What you can do to support someone after a traumatic event

Provide practical support

Help them to find time and space to recover. You could offer to look after the children or help with errands.

Encourage them to return to normal routines to help them restore a sense of order and control.

Encourage self-care: rest, healthy eating, exercise, relaxation, and reducing caffeine, cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol.

Join them in enjoyable activities and help them plan at least one enjoyable activity each day.

Acknowledge their achievements, even small ones, as progress may be hard for them to see.

Be familiar with the support options available, and encourage them to seek professional help if:

- they don't seem to be their usual self
- they're not improving after two weeks
- you're worried and think they would benefit from speaking to a professional.

Offer emotional support

Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings when they're ready.

Provide reassurance that distress is to be expected after their experience.

You don't need to find solutions or make their distress go away. Simply **listening and showing concern** is most important.

Respect their need for time alone, but **encourage them to have some company** each day.

If they don't want to talk, you can still show your support by **spending time with them**, talking about other things, and doing practical things to help.

Look after yourself

Supporting someone else can take a toll on you. It is crucial to take time out and connect with friends and supportive people in your community. You may also need to seek your own support from your GP or a mental health professional. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and TIACS can also provide support to family members of those impacted by trauma.

Helpful contacts

Relationships Australia - www.relationships.org.au
or call 1300 364 277

1800 RESPECT - www.1800respect.org.au
or 1800 737 732

Carers Australia - www.carersaustralia.com.au
or call 1800 422 737

Parentline - www.parentline.com.au
or call 1300 30 1300

Headspace - www.headspace.org.au

TIACS is a free service for all blue collar workers including truckies, farmers, tradies and their families and supporters. Phone or text 0488 846 988. www.tiacs.org



See support options and resources on the Healthy Heads website at www.healthyheads.org.au



Download the Healthy Heads App



Download the Healthy Heads Recovery after Trauma resources