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## What Now? 7 Things To Do After A Traumatic Incident

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Have you ever experienced an event so horrible that you can't seem to stop thinking about it, or you find yourself 'on edge' and reactive? Unfortunately more than 2 out of 3 people will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime (such as sexual and/or physical assault, abuse, exposure to war, death of a loved one, an accident, a relationship breakup, bullying). Some people recover well after a traumatic experience, however for others the road to recovery is a little longer.

If you have experienced a traumatic event, you'll know that the thoughts and feelings you have can be distracting, overwhelming, and sometimes they can interfere with your everyday life. So what do you do? This article suggests 7 things to do after a traumatic incident that will help with your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

If you're experiencing distressing thoughts and feelings, or you're behaving in a way that you're not finding helpful, try the following:

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## 1. Make sure you acknowledge the trauma.

Accept that you've been through a distressing experience, and give yourself permission to have a reaction to the event.

## 2. Ensure you seek the support of others you trust.

It can be helpful to talk about your experience ... and sometimes often. You may also find writing or drawing helpful to dispel the feelings of distress.

## 3. Understand how the trauma may affect you.

Some people have strong reactions after a trauma. These can include thoughts (invasive memories, nightmares, difficulties concentrating), feelings (fear, numbness, depression, guilt, irritability, panic) or physical reactions (overly alert, easily startled, exhausted, difficulties sleeping). In the *short term* know that it's okay (and normal) to experience these things.

## 4. Do something positive.

Talking to someone, thanking someone, or getting back to 'normal' things can help in regaining a sense of 'control' and can counteract any feelings of powerlessness.

## 5. Make meaning of the trauma.

People who find a sense of meaning for the trauma can have a renewed sense of purpose – they often reassess their goals, values, and relationships – which can help them to grow and live life more fully.

## 6. Look after yourself in the best way you can.

Traumatic events can often throw everyday routines out. And while it may be difficult, eating a healthy diet, exercising and sleeping well, using relaxation strategies, and not overusing alcohol or other drugs will also help in your wellbeing after a trauma.

## 7. Finally, understand that it's okay to seek help.

If you experience distressing physical symptoms or feelings, you feel numb or empty, your relationships are becoming problematic, you have very little support, or you are increasing your use of drugs or alcohol, seeking professional assistance could be useful.

Hopefully these 7 tips will help you to recover after a traumatic experience. However, know that further help is available if you need it. It's useful to know that Psychologists use a range of effective techniques and therapies to assist people in resolving any distressing symptoms they may have as a consequence of a traumatic experience.

If you would like help in managing your thoughts, feelings or behaviours, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, [amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au](mailto:amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au) or [click here](#)

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