

Asking for help



Sometimes the effects of trauma can be too much to cope with on our own. Try to talk with someone you feel safe with or ask for professional help.

It can be difficult to talk about what has happened, it might be that you only feel ready to talk about some of what happened or none. Making a start can be the first step to making sense of everything that has happened to you and finding the best ways to help you to recover.

Speaking to a counsellor

At Streetwise our Counsellors work with a range of issues and we are here for you when you are ready to talk. Visit our website for more information about counselling www.streetwisenorth.org.uk

Useful contacts

- www.themix.org.uk/crime-and-safety/victims-of-crime
- www.rctn.org.uk
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.mind.org.uk
- Childline: 0800 1111
- Samaritans: 116123



For More Information:



If you would like more information, please visit our website.

If you have been affected by any of the issues described in this leaflet you can talk to a Counsellor or a Youth Worker at a Streetwise drop-in.

Advice is FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

Produced by: Streetwise Young People's Project:

Young People's Information, Advice, Counselling, Sexual Health and Support Service for 11-25 year olds.

Streetwise

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The Streetwise guide to Surviving a Traumatic Experience



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What is a traumatic experience?



A traumatic experience is a distressing or upsetting event, that puts you or someone you are very close to at serious risk of harm, either physically or emotionally. Traumatic experiences can be accidents, disasters or being hurt deliberately by someone.

Some types of traumatic experience:

- Sexual assault or rape.
- Domestic abuse.
- Childhood abuse.
- Being a victim of or witnessing a crime .
- Surviving or witnessing a terrorist attack .
- Experiencing or witnessing an accident, such as a car crash.
- The loss of someone close to you.
- A medical emergency or life-threatening illness.
- Extreme violence or war.
- Other experiences of harm or life-threatening events.

How might I be feeling?

There is no right way to feel after a traumatic experience. We all cope with the experience of harm differently. People find different ways of surviving; some of these coping strategies can be helpful while others might be unhelpful. Traumatic experiences can bring powerful or disturbing reactions.

It's ok to feel or experience any number of things.



Common reactions to traumatic experiences

- Denial – this can be a way of managing our hurt and upset, we attempt to ignore the traumatic experience, pretending it didn't happen to survive and move on with our life.
- In shock – feel numb or cut off from our feelings.
- A range of emotions – sad, anger, helplessness, confusion, distressed, overwhelmed, guilty.
- Nightmares – these can be bad dreams or unwanted thoughts that occur during the night
- Flashbacks – these are unwanted memories that can come at any time and make you feel the trauma is occurring again. Flashbacks can occur due to smell, sounds, images.
- Physical reactions – a physical feeling reoccurring that we felt in our bodies during the trauma, such as increased heart rate and sweating.
- Triggers – when we have reactions to past events, due to smell, sounds, images, people that remind you of the traumatic experience.
- Powerlessness – the belief that nothing is going to change.
- Anxiety or being fearful.
- Believing the world is an extremely dangerous place.
- Using drugs or alcohol to cope.
- Self-harm and Suicidal thoughts.



Helping yourself



There are many activities you can try to help you cope with the trauma you have experienced. It can take time to get in the habit of using some of these techniques, but some of these you might already be trying.

- Writing about flashbacks, nightmares and emotions – putting your thoughts somewhere else can start the process of taking unhelpful thoughts away.
- Listening to nice music, dance and move your body.
- Being outdoors/exercising.
- Talking to people you feel safe with.
- Going slow and remembering what you have gone through is real and difficult.
- When flashbacks occur, tap each finger with you thumb five times on your left hand and then doing the same on your right hand – something that is unnoticeable if you are at school/ work etc. You could also stamp your feet or clap your hands reminding yourself where you are and that it is an unwanted memory.
- Connect with others: spend time with friends or family.
- Use affirmations (saying positive statements out loud to yourself). Try looking in the mirror (or not) and saying **'I am safe from harm'** or **'I have survived'** or you can make up your own!

