

## Use support

- Keep in touch with friends, and family
- Talk to people you trust
- Talk to others who may have shared your trauma, e.g. others who were there at the same time or a support group for people with similar experiences
- If you have any urgent health concerns contact your GP or 111 for assistance.

## Psychological aspects

Allow your mind to follow its natural recovery pattern by:

- recognising your reactions to trauma as natural and normal
- letting yourself think about the trauma when you are able to
- continuing to go to the places you normally go to even if they have unpleasant memories for you
- expressing the feelings you have when it is safe to do so
- recognising that any self-criticism or guilt you may feel are common aspects of post trauma reactions

- noticing how the reactions gradually reduce in intensity
- being pleased with yourself for getting through a difficult time
- understanding that outside events may slow down the recovery process e.g. media coverage, new information about the event, anniversaries etc.

## Further help

### **British Red Cross**

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

Regional: 0115 852 8000

### **Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

National: 08457 90 90 90

Chesterfield: 01246 270000

Derby: 01332 364444

### **Derbyshire Victim Services**

<http://www.core-derbyshire.com/>

0800 612 6505 text CORE DVS 82228

Email: [support@derbyshirecore.org](mailto:support@derbyshirecore.org)

### **Derbyshire Prepared**

[www.derbyshireprepared.org.uk/](http://www.derbyshireprepared.org.uk/)

Alternatively, contact your General Practitioner (GP), who will be able to refer you to a specialist service if necessary.

# Coping with a traumatic event

You may find this leaflet helpful if you have been involved in, or affected by, a traumatic incident, in particular the recent Toddbrook Reservoir.

It provides information on how you may expect to feel in the days and months ahead, and to help you understand and have more control over your experience.

## **What is a traumatic event?**

Traumatic events are often frightening or shocking. They are commonly outside the range of 'normal' experience and can be sudden, overwhelming, unexpected, threatening and may include loss.

## **Who is affected?**

Traumatic events affect not only people who are directly involved, and their friends and family, but also witnesses, rescuers and helpers.

## **Common Reactions**

Individuals react to trauma in very different ways. If you have witnessed or been involved in a traumatic event like the ones described above, you may notice changes in how you feel (emotionally and physically), think and behave.

## **Feelings**

- Feelings of numbness and unreality
- Fear, anxiety or loss of confidence
- Tearfulness
- Feeling low or depressed
- Sadness and feelings of loss
- Anger.

## **Physical**

- A change in sleeping patterns – sleeplessness or sleeping too much
- Feeling shaky
- Headaches
- Stomach upset
- Racing heart and rapid breathing
- Lack of interest in sex
- A change in appetite – not feeling like eating, or eating more than usual.

## **Thinking**

- Poor concentration and memory
- Intrusive memories of what happened
- Nightmares or upsetting dreams
- Confusion or disorientation
- Difficulty in making decisions.

## **Behaving**

- Avoiding places or actions associated with the trauma
- Being irritable with people close to you, or withdrawing from people
- Being over-cautious or 'hyper-vigilant': concerned about your own safety and that of people close to you.

These are all normal reactions to a traumatic event: they do not mean that you are becoming mentally unwell, coping badly, or not being 'strong' enough.

Some people experience a number of these reactions, some only a few. Some people are quite numb at first, and it takes a few days or even weeks for them to feel the impact of what has happened.

To begin with, you may find it hard to get what you have seen or experienced out of your head. Although this is very distressing, it is a natural response, as your mind tries to make sense of what has occurred.

Occasionally a traumatic incident can bring back memories and feelings connected with an earlier loss or distressing experience. This is quite normal, although it may be confusing or frightening.

Your reactions to a traumatic event may initially be very strong and make it difficult to get on with everyday life. For many people, however, the memories and feelings gradually become less intrusive over time.

## **What can you do**

Reacting to trauma is normal and does not mean that there is something wrong with you. Understand your reactions are normal and are signs that your mind is processing and coming to terms with what has happened. The following things can be helpful:

## **Look after yourself**

- Take extra care
- Take plenty of rest breaks
- Maintain your usual exercise habits or begin to exercise gently
- Eat a balanced diet and include your favourite foods
- Limit alcohol, sugar and caffeine intake as they can increase overall stress levels
- Avoid making important decisions or taking on additional responsibilities
- Try to be more understanding of yourself.

## **Aim for a balance of activities**

- Re-establish a manageable routine of household tasks.
- Keep up with the activities you normally engage in and find enjoyable
- Keep regular working hours
- Include time for relaxation and pleasure.