Traumatic Stress Reactions

A traumatic stress reaction is an emotional aftershock of a disaster or other significantly stressful event. Symptoms may occur immediately after the event or weeks after the event is over.

Some common signs/symptoms of emotional reactions to a disaster:

Physical
- Nausea and/or upset stomach
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Restlessness
- Difficulty sleeping

Emotional
- Anxiety and/or fear
- Guilt
- Grief and/or depression
- Anger

Cognitive
- Nightmares
- Confusion and/or disorientation
- Difficulty concentrating

Behavioral
- Avoidance and/or withdrawing
- Emotional outbursts
- Erratic behavior

Dial 9-1-1 for life threatening emergencies
Emergency Contacts

Emotional emergencies or information 24 hours a day in Bergen: 262-HELP (201-262-4357)

Physical emergencies - dial 9-1-1

Taking care of yourself following a traumatic event . . .

✔ Try to rest a bit more

✔ Contact friends and talk

✔ Re-establish your normal schedule as soon as possible

✔ Fight against boredom

✔ Physical activity can be helpful

✔ Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even when you don't feel like it)

✔ Avoid alcohol and drugs taken without physician recommendation/prescription

✔ Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they'll decrease over time and be less painful

✔ Seek out professional help if the feelings become prolonged or intense

Taking care of others following a traumatic event . . .

☞ Listen carefully

☞ Spend time with the traumatized person

☞ Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help

☞ Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for children etc . . .

☞ Give them time to be alone

☞ Help them stay away from alcohol and drugs

☞ Keep in mind what they've been through

✗ Don't try to explain it away

✗ Don't tell them that they are lucky it wasn't worse

✗ Don't take their anger, other feelings or outbursts personally

Get further assistance if . . .

• The person is having life-threatening symptoms

• The person is suicidal or homicidal

• The person is out of control