

## SUPPORTING OUR WELLBEING AND COPING WITH REACTIONS AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

Most of the events in our lives are situations for which we are relatively well prepared and able to cope with. Sometimes however, events happen that go beyond what we imagined we would have to face.

The effects of these events can have a psychological impact on those affected directly and indirectly. Individuals may have various stress reactions that could present emotional as well as physical symptoms. They are normal ways for our bodies to respond to significant stress and may include:

- Shock, sadness, anger, fear, guilt, anxiety, numbness, feeling lost, helplessness.
- Tiredness, tension, appetite changes.
- Difficulty making decisions or concentrating, confusion, memory problems, slowed thinking.
- Restlessness, pacing, withdrawal from others, or sleep difficulties.

Each person's experience is unique and personal. However, there are steps that individuals can take for themselves and their families/whanau to mitigate and lessen the impact felt.

- Keep informed and up to date about what's happened and avoid overexposure to media
- Focus on your self-care and that of your family by ensuring that you are having regular meals - together where possible and keeping up your fluids - we need to be fuelling ourselves appropriately so that we can cope. When we are stressed it's possible to not eat and drink as much as our bodies need. Doing this makes a difference and is a practical strategy that works.
- Take breaks and 'step away' from work regularly during the day - taking morning and afternoon tea breaks, stopping for lunch and remind colleagues to do the same.
- Do more of the things that work for you when you are feeling pressured or stressed.
- That could be going for a walk, talking to a friend or listening to some music. Check in and do more of what works for you.
- Monitor your levels of fatigue and know that it is normal to have some disruption to your normal sleep. Ensure that you make it a priority to have the sleep and rest you need.

Some things that can help you sleep-

- Stick with your normal go to bed times and routine,

**Vitae**

PO Box 10950  
Wellington 6143

 0508 664 981  
 assistance@vitae.co.nz  
 vitae.co.nz

- Have your bedroom dark as you can and cool- about 17-19 degrees is good,
  - Don't look at your cell phone at night as the blue light can affect your sleep,
  - Don't eat for a couple of hours before going to bed
  - During the day be outside when you can even if for short periods. Exposure to light helps us sleep.
  - If you are getting tired and not sleeping talk to your manager at work especially if you are in a safety sensitive role as there may need to be some changes to your role and duties.
- Don't ask individuals effected to retell their story as this can be re-traumatizing for people
  - If you feel anxious, angry or depressed, you are not alone. Talk to friends, family or colleagues who likely are experiencing the same feelings and reach out for support.
  - If you have children/tamariki who are impacted, keep open dialogue with them regarding their concerns Don't minimize whats happened , but talk about your ability as a family/whanau to cope with it and get through . Minimize their exposure about the events on the TV.
  - Feelings of anxiety and depression following a traumatic event are natural. If these symptoms continue, even after order has been restored, or if these feelings begin to overwhelm you, seek support early as we know that early help seeking makes a positive and lasting difference.

### **How to Support Each Other:**

*Acknowledge Individual Reactions* – be aware of the different ways that people react and respect those differences.

*Be Kind to Each Other* – be gentle and understanding, people may not be operating at their best. You may walk together at lunch when at work or stop and have a shared lunch but do things together and support each other.

*Give Yourself and Others Time* – try to maintain routines of rest, relaxation, exercise and diversions. In time the common reactions tend to diminish for most people. However, if you find you need support in dealing with the effects, speaking with someone can help and we are available 24 hours a day.

We suggest that you save this number on your cell phone and remember you can ring at any time.

**Call Vitae on 0508 664 981**

**Vitae**

PO Box 10950  
Wellington 6143

 0508 664 981

 assistance@vitae.co.nz

 vitae.co.nz