



**Bærum municipality**  
Psychosocial support team



**Information for you if you've suffered a  
traumatic or serious incident or event.**

## **Serious incidents include things like:**

- Accident
- Threat / Assault
- Sudden death

Factors that can increase the impact of an event include age, stress, experience, personal vulnerability, as well as leading a demanding life or life situation.

# Common reactions

**People react differently when a serious event occurs, including within the family. Some people react emotionally at once, while others have a delayed reaction. Some react by taking some kind of action or react rationally, while others appear indifferent or apathetic. Some distract themselves by overworking and are unable to deal with what has happened. Try to accept and acknowledge the different ways people react.**

## **Unreality/Shock**

Many people experience that things seem unreal after a traumatic event. This feeling gradually diminishes and is typically replaced by a more realistic view of what has happened. When impressions and feelings become too strong, it is normal to distance yourself from what has happened. Shutting out feelings immediately after experiencing a major incident or traumatic event can be a way of protecting oneself. Reality gradually returns as one manages to take in and start to process what has happened.

## **Being on full alert**

Some people experience intense fear or anxiety after a traumatic event. It is not unusual to be more nervous or insecure following a serious incident or event. You may react to sounds or movements in a different way than previously. Being on full alert is a natural reaction; however, being constantly on the lookout is both mentally and physically draining, and you may experience a dip in energy levels. Being on full alert normally decreases in intensity over time.

## **Physical reactions**

Many people experience various bodily ailments such as trembling, sweating, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, headaches, palpitations, chest pain, powerlessness, or tension in the body, such as a stiff neck and shoulders. Pain or other previous ailments may also feel more intense after a serious trauma or event.

Abdominal pain and indigestion may also occur. Your appetite may increase or decrease compared to normal.

## **Sleeping problems**

Difficulty in falling asleep, restless sleep, nightmares, insomnia, or an increased need to sleep are not unusual.

## **Anger**

Increased levels of anger, frustration, and mood swings are common. Anger often impacts those closest to you.

## **Sadness**

When the period of initial shock subsides following a serious incident, and the consequences of what has happened finally hit home, many people react with sadness and confusion or experience the feeling that life is meaningless. Some people may also feel emotionally drained and dejected.

## **Grief**

Grief is associated with the feeling of loss; for example, when close relations are involved. Grief can also be associated with the loss of a job or position, the loss of hope or that the future will not be as you had planned.

## **Concentration**

Difficulty concentrating and a reduced ability to remember things is usual during the initial period after suffering a trauma or serious incident, and can impact your ability to work, drive, read, etc.

### **What can you do?**

- Be careful not to share too much information to begin with.
- Protect yourself and set clear boundaries. You decide what you will participate in, and who you will share your thoughts and feelings with.
- It is sensible to be with someone and not be alone. Seek support from friends and family who you feel safe and secure with. It will make you feel safer and calmer.
- Protect yourself from the press, social media and outsiders. Exposure can cause unpleasant reactions at a later point. Just after an incident has occurred, your ability to make informed decisions may be diminished because you may have emotionally shut down.
- Accept practical help when offered.
- Be careful with intoxicants and sedatives during the initial period after a serious incident or event has occurred. It may interfere with, and delay, the time needed to process what has happened.
- Structure and routines in your daily life are important such as regular mealtimes and sleeping patterns. Go back to school or work as soon as you are able to. Adjust to how much you can manage. Accept that you perhaps can't handle everything as well as you did before the incident.

- To prevent undesirable delayed complications, it is important to find a way to find a balance between being caught up in the incident and taking a break from your own and others' pain. It is essential to process things well and not give yourself a bad conscience.
- Even if you do not wish to do anything, try to relax by doing things you previously enjoyed, like going to a football match or concert. These recommendations are based on research.
- Be extra kind to yourself.

Eventually, you will recover sufficient stability to handle day-to-day life once again. In the long-term, the structure and rhythm of everyday life will help you to continue to process what has happened.

- Contact Bærum municipality's psychosocial support team for advice, guidance and support.

**Emergency phoneline: Tel: 67 56 44 40**

- Contact your GP if you have persistent problems with concentration, anxiety or difficulty sleeping.

# Support for children and teenagers

Children often react differently compared to adults and will often want to go over a serious incident or event again and again. Remember: children should be allowed to be children, even if the family or other adults are going through difficulties.

Every child reacts differently. The main rule is that there is no right or wrong reaction. Try to find out what the child has understood. Explain in simple words what has happened.

## How to create a sense of safety for children

- As an adult, try to convey a sense of calm and stability; give children access to people who provide care and support.
- Provide brief and clear information about what has happened. What you say must be true; however, you do not have to go into all the details.
- Be consistent – both with your feelings and stick to daily routines which the child is used to such as school, leisure activities, and other positive things.
- Be open to the child's reactions, listen to them, and provide support.
- Explain that children are not responsible for what happened.

# Advice to friends and those affected

People going through a crisis rarely take the initiative to get assistance. Therefore, it is important that family and friends get in touch when needed. Receiving positive support from family and friends can have a decisive role in affecting how those affected cope after a crisis.

Feelings and reactions change with time. When initial support from friends and family starts to wane, this can be the toughest period for those who have experienced trauma or a serious incident. It is therefore important that family and friends continue to provide support and care beyond the initial period. It is alright if family and friends take the initiative to divide up practical tasks between each other, making firm arrangements about the times they are able to help.

- Be available and ready to listen when the other person needs it. Let the person who has experienced the trauma decide when and what they want to talk about.
- Be careful and avoid asking too many questions
- Help with practical tasks so things can return to normal in a way that provides structure, stability and gives hope.



**For information and advice on how to cope with traumatic events and serious incidents, visit the following websites:**

[www.rvts.no](http://www.rvts.no)

**Stressmestring SMART app**

[www.krisepsykologi.no](http://www.krisepsykologi.no)

[www.kognitiv.no](http://www.kognitiv.no)

[www.ung.no](http://www.ung.no)

**Bærum municipality's psychosocial crisis team provides advice, guidance and counselling for those involved in serious incidents including victims, relatives, witnesses and carers.**

**Emergency telephone: Tel: 67 56 44 40**

**A referral from your doctor is not required.**

**Counselling and support are provided free of charge.**