

Normal reactions to an abnormal situation

Most people do not become emotionally disabled in response to a crisis situation or extreme tragedy; their reactions are **normal and common** and result from the understandable stress linked to the event. These reactions can be both positive and negative and are expressed in a variety of physical and emotional reactions during various phases of the tragedy. It is important to know about these reactions especially the negative ones and also to know that these reactions are **temporary** and in most case there is no reason for serious concern and no special assistance, other than reassurance and support is needed.

Some initial negative responses to disaster:

- Stunned, dazed, shocked, confused, disoriented.
- Fear, anxiety, tension, panic, restlessness, guilt.
- Denial of the situation
- Difficulty making decisions
- Irritability, being startled easily
- Need to cling to others or extreme withdrawal
- Sudden anger and aggression

Common Negative Reactions that may continue.

- Distressing thoughts or images of the event while awake or dreaming.
- Feelings of “re-living” the experience, often accompanied by anxiety. (Flashbacks)
- Feeling upset both emotionally and physically when faced with reminders of the experience.
- Avoiding talking, thinking or feeling about the traumatic event.
- Feeling numb.
- Withdrawing from others. Feeling detached.
- Loss of interest in activities that were previously pleasurable.
- Constantly feeling alert, jumpy, scared.
- Irritability or outbursts of anger.
- Difficulty falling asleep or bad dreams.
- Physical aches and pains for which there is no medical reason.
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering; slow thinking
- Self-destructive and impulsive behaviour

<i>What is not Helpful.</i>	What is Helpful
Doing Risky things. (Reckless Driving, Substance Abuse.)	Trying to maintain a normal schedule
Overeating or not eating.	Exercising in moderation.
Not taking care of yourself	Praying

Extreme withdrawal from family and friends.	Getting adequate rest and eating healthy meals.
Extreme avoidance of thinking or talking about the event or loss.	Using relaxing methods like listening to music, breathing exercises.
Working too much	Doing positive activities like going for a walk, reading a book, meeting friends.
Watching too much television or spending time on the internet especially on coverage related to the event.	Seeking counselling if you are feeling overwhelmed.
Blaming yourself or others	
Violence or Fighting with others	

If you need help, call Rozan's Toll Free Helpline at 080022444 or at 03034442288

**Acknowledgement: Psychosocial first aid manual Rozan
National Child Traumatic Stress Network National Center for PTSD**