

Appendix 9: Coping with trauma

What to do immediately after the event

- Make sure that you are with people. Do not go home to an empty house, get a friend or relative to stay with you.
- Talk about the incident with others. Talking will help you get over the experience.
- Remind yourself that the event is over and that you are safe now.
- Get some physical exercise to 'burn off' tension and anxiety.
- Avoid alcohol, sedatives and sleeping pills (they will only dull the experience and not allow you to deal properly with your feelings).
- Restrict stimulants (e.g. tea, coffee, chocolate, Coca-Cola, cigarettes), as you don't want to make your body even more agitated than it already is.
- Try and eat something even if you do not feel like eating.
- If you can't sleep, do not lie in bed tossing and turning - get up and do something relaxing until you feel tired.

How to handle the next few days

- Remind yourself that your reactions are a normal result of trauma and will pass in time
- Try to get back into your normal routine as soon as possible. You may need to gradually introduce yourself to tasks that seem difficult.
- If you feel uncomfortable, afraid or anxious, take some long slow breaths and remind yourself that you are safe and the trauma is over.
- Try and do things that are relaxing and enjoyable.
- Continue to talk to your family, friends, and colleagues about the trauma, as this will help you to get over your feelings. Even if you feel a bit detached from other people, don't reject their support.
- Work on your general stress levels by ensuring that you have adequate sleep, a good diet, and regular exercise. Practice relaxation techniques to help reduce nervous tension.
- Because accidents are more common after severe stress, take extra care e.g. drive more carefully and be more careful around the home and with machinery.
- Allow yourself time to deal with memories. There may be some aspects of the experience that will be difficult to forget.

**REMEMBER THAT AT ANY TIME YOU CAN ASK FOR
HELP FROM A COUNSELLOR OR THERAPIST**