

Information on crisis management by the Student Health Care Centre

It is normal to react to difficult events. These reactions may occur immediately following an incident or some time after. One moment, what has happened can seem unreal, the next it is painfully true. The reactions normally diminish gradually as you get the chance to think through, understand and process what you have been going through.

Below are some examples of common reactions.

- **Anguish, anxiety and fear** It can be difficult to be alone and you feel restless and physically worried.
- **Intrusive memories** All impressions are gathered and relived both when you are awake and asleep.
- **Memory and concentration difficulties** Your train of thought may be constantly disrupted by thoughts about the incident. Your study performance deteriorates but the higher you aim, the more difficult it can be to get through your studies.
- **Sleep-related problems** such as difficulties getting to sleep, nightmares etc. are common.
- **Physical symptoms** such as nausea, dizziness, muscle pain, headache, stomach problems etc.
- **Feelings of guilt** as you think about what you did or did not do.
- **Sadness/depression.** For those people that have suffered the loss of a close relative, the feelings of loss, pain, longing and sadness naturally become more explicit.
- **Irritation and anger** that is often directed towards helpers, family and friends.
- **Previous traumas come to the surface.** An appropriate time to seek counselling.
- **Relationships to others** may suffer as the person affected becomes isolated. The attention from people around you can be intensive to start with, but may unfortunately also be short-lived. *It is important that friends/fellow students are aware that the need for support may exist for a longer period.*

How can I handle the situation?

Enlist the help of friends and family!

Talk about what has happened and how you feel. For each time that you express your feelings with words, it is an opportunity to process what has happened. Accept your reactions as normal expressions for abnormal events.

Sometimes it may be difficult for friends/fellow students to make contact for fear of not knowing what to say.

If you have the energy to make contact with your friends and other important people around you, this may help.

Stick to your normal routines!

Go back to your studies as soon as you have the energy to do so, and try to go back to your normal routines. Doing so creates security and reduces the risk of becoming isolated. Accept that your normal energy levels will be lower for a while and do not put too much pressure on yourself.

Take care of yourself!

Take care of your dietary habits and sleep well. Physical exercise is good as it allows you to

sleep better and any tension in your muscles disappears. You also get a chance to distance yourself from your thoughts and the grief. Make use of relaxation exercises before you go to sleep. Be careful with sedatives and alcohol. Alcohol intensifies depression during periods of grief and can often lead to negative experiences.

Ask for study support!

If you experience problems in coping with your studies initially, it is important to contact your teacher or study adviser as soon as possible to resolve your study situation. Putting too much pressure on yourself can make it more difficult to process the crisis.