



**xfordshire**  
Be Ready...



**COPING WITH  
DISASTER AND  
PERSONAL CRISIS**

Psychological First Aid

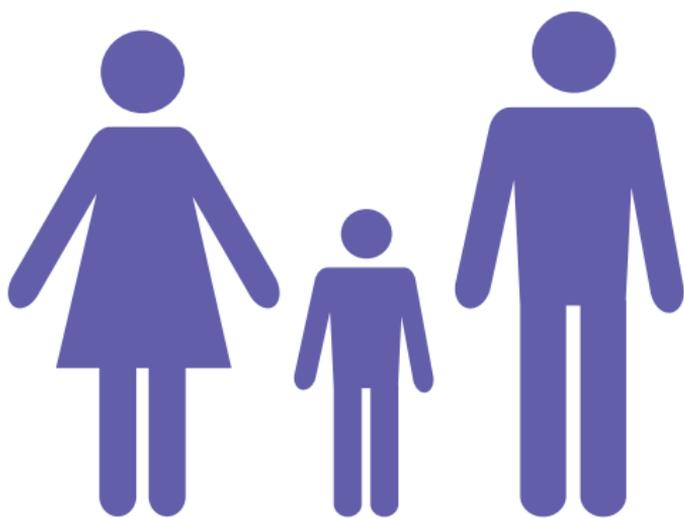


**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

# What is Psychological First Aid?

When faced with a major trauma or personal crisis, it is common to experience very strong emotional reactions. This can interfere with your usual ability to cope and can cause you considerable distress. We hope the following information will help you to understand how others have reacted in traumatic situations.

It is important to remember that these reactions may not occur at first and may appear after a delay.



## What to expect

People who have experienced a disaster or personal crisis have found that they suffer from a variety of upsetting and distressful reactions.

Normal feelings you may experience include:

- A tendency to keep reliving the incident in your mind, sometimes called 'flashbacks'
- Dreams or nightmares
- Anxiety and panicky feelings, even over small things

Other symptoms you may experience include:

- Feeling irritable
- Feeling depressed
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Finding it difficult to concentrate
- Finding it difficult to work
- Feeling guilt or angry about what has happened
- Feeling upset

There is no set pattern to the feelings you may experience. Remember that everyone is different and may react in different ways to the same incident.

# Physical Symptoms

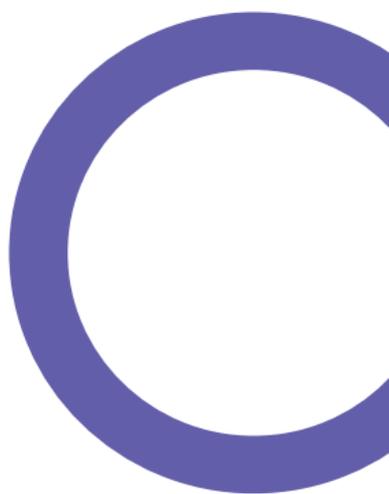
It is common to have physical symptoms as well as strong emotional feelings.

You may find that you:

- Feel tired
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Have bad dreams
- Have a choking feeling in your throat
- Feel your heart beating fast
- Find yourself breathing too quickly
- Have a pain in your neck or head
- Have tremors, or shake
- Lose interest in sex

This list is not exhaustive, you may have other symptoms. Consult a doctor if you feel you need more support. Doctors can also signpost you to support organisations.

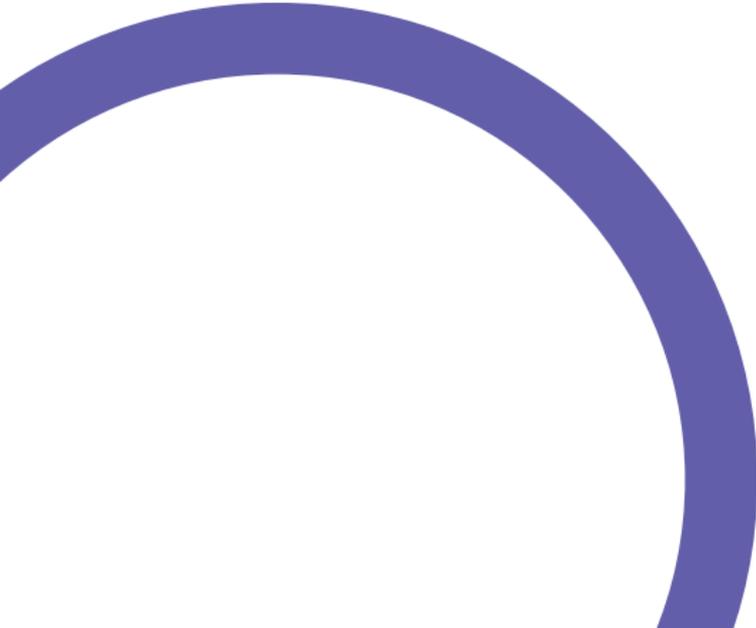
Your doctor may recommend counselling which may help you to express your feelings and ultimately allow natural healing to take place.



## Steps to consider

You may find that new friendships develop but you may also want to spend time alone or with family and close friends.

Things you may wish to do:

- Try to express your feelings and emotions
  - Share your grief with your children
  - Take the opportunities to talk about what happened if you find this helps
  - Perhaps be part of a group of people who care
  - Realise that memories and feelings may stay with you for a long time
  - Take time to rest, think, and be with those who are important to you
  - Express your needs clearly and honestly
  - Try to keep your life as normal as possible with normal daily routines and activities
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# National Support Organisations

These organisations offer support to people involved in coping with a disaster or personal crisis:

<b>Samaritans</b>	08457 909090
<b>CRUSE Bereavement</b>	0844 4779400
<b>Victim Support</b>	0845 3030900
<b>NHS</b>	111

## Remember:

- Children experience similar grief but may be affected in different ways
- You can ask for help
- Accidents are more common after severe stress, so drive carefully and be careful around the home environment

## Need more information?

**Oxfordshire County Council**  
Social and Community Services  
0845 050 7666  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

This leaflet has been produced by Oxfordshire County Council's  
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