

## Immediate and Delayed Reactions to Trauma

<p><b>Immediate Emotional Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbness and detachment</li> <li>Anxiety or severe fear</li> <li>Guilt (including survivor guilt)</li> <li>Exhilaration as a result of surviving</li> <li>Anger</li> <li>Sadness</li> <li>Helplessness</li> <li>Feeling unreal; depersonalization (e.g., feeling as if you are watching yourself)</li> <li>Disorientation</li> <li>Feeling out of control</li> <li>Denial</li> <li>Constriction of feelings</li> <li>Feeling overwhelmed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Delayed Emotional Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irritability and/or hostility</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Mood swings, instability</li> <li>Anxiety (e.g., phobia, generalised anxiety)</li> <li>Fear of trauma recurrence</li> <li>Grief reactions</li> <li>Shame</li> <li>Feelings of fragility and/or vulnerability</li> <li>Emotional detachment from anything that requires emotional reactions (e.g., significant and/or family relationships, conversations about self, discussion of traumatic events or reactions to them)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immediate Physical Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nausea and/or gastrointestinal distress</li> <li>Sweating or shivering</li> <li>Faintness</li> <li>Muscle tremors or uncontrollable shaking</li> <li>Elevated heartbeat, respiration, and blood pressure</li> <li>Extreme fatigue or exhaustion</li> <li>Greater startle responses</li> <li>Depersonalization</li> </ul>	<p><b>Delayed Physical Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleep disturbances, nightmares</li> <li>Somatization (e.g., increased focus on and worry about body aches and pains)</li> <li>Appetite and digestive changes</li> <li>Lowered resistance to colds and infection</li> <li>Persistent fatigue</li> <li>Elevated cortisol levels</li> <li>Hyperarousal</li> <li>Long-term health effects including heart, liver, autoimmune, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immediate Cognitive Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty concentrating</li> <li>Rumination or racing thoughts (e.g., replaying the traumatic event over and over again)</li> <li>Distortion of time and space (e.g., traumatic event may be perceived as if it was happening in slow motion, or a few seconds can be perceived as minutes)</li> <li>Memory problems (e.g., not being able to recall important aspects of the trauma)</li> <li>Strong identification with victims</li> </ul>	<p><b>Delayed Cognitive Reactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intrusive memories or flashbacks</li> <li>Reactivation of previous traumatic events</li> <li>Self-blame</li> <li>Preoccupation with event</li> <li>Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>Magical thinking: belief that certain behaviours, including avoidant behaviour, will protect against future trauma</li> <li>Belief that feelings or memories are dangerous</li> <li>Generalisation of triggers (e.g., a person who experiences a home invasion during the daytime may avoid being alone during the day)</li> <li>Suicidal thinking</li> </ul>

<b>Immediate Behavioural Reactions</b> Startled reaction Restlessness Sleep and appetite disturbances Difficulty expressing oneself Argumentative behaviour Increased use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco Withdrawal and apathy Avoidant behaviours	<b>Delayed Behavioural Reactions</b> Avoidance of event reminders Social relationship disturbances Decreased activity level Engagement in high-risk behaviours Increased use of alcohol and drugs Withdrawal
<b>Immediate Existential Reactions</b> Intense use of prayer Restoration of faith in the goodness of others (e.g., receiving help from others) Loss of self-efficacy Despair about humanity, particularly if the event was intentional Immediate disruption of life assumptions (e.g., fairness, safety, goodness, predictability of life)	<b>Delayed Existential Reactions</b> Questioning (e.g., “Why me?”) Increased cynicism, disillusionment Increased self-confidence (e.g., “If I can survive this, I can survive anything”) Loss of purpose Renewed faith Hopelessness Reestablishing priorities Redefining meaning and importance of life Reworking life’s assumptions to accommodate the trauma (e.g., taking a self-defence class to reestablish a sense of safety)