

# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A STRESSFUL EVENT

*Distributed by the University Counseling Center at Florida State University  
For more information, please visit [counseling.fsu.edu](http://counseling.fsu.edu) OR call  
850.644.TALK(8255) Find us on Facebook! [Facebook.com/UCCFSU](https://www.facebook.com/UCCFSU)*



When we go through stressful events, we often have strong emotional and physical reactions. Although not everyone has a strong or noticeable reaction, it is very common and quite normal for people to have emotional “after-shocks” when they have experienced a difficult event.

These reactions may happen immediately, or they may happen in the days, weeks, months, or even longer following the event.

Just as the onset of these events is somewhat unpredictable, so is the course. Your reactions may last anywhere from a few hours, to days, weeks, months, or longer. Finding understanding and support from friends, loved ones, and your community often helps these reactions pass more quickly. Mental health professionals, such as those who work at The University Counseling Center, can be a great, confidential, resource when coping with troublesome reactions.

**Here are some very common reactions to stress:**

## **PHYSICAL**

Feeling Tired / Low Energy  
Difficulty Sleeping  
Feeling Shaky  
Twitches  
Shortness of Breath  
Rapid Breathing  
Rapid Heartbeat  
Headaches  
Blurry Vision  
Nausea/Vomiting  
Thirst  
Hunger  
Dizziness  
Excessive Sweating  
Weakness  
Fainting

## **MENTAL**

Difficulty Making Decisions  
Confusion  
Poor Attention  
Placing Blame on Others  
Heightened or Lowered Alertness  
Poor Concentration  
Forgetfulness  
Poor Problem Solving  
Feeling Disoriented  
Disturbed Thinking  
Nightmares  
Intrusive Memories  
Flashbacks  
Suicidal Ideas  
Change in Values  
Search for Meaning

## **EMOTIONAL**

Anxiety  
Severe Panic  
Grief  
Denial  
Survivor Guilt / Self Blame  
Emotional Numbness  
Uncertainty  
Difficulty Controlling Emotions  
Depression  
Reduced Pleasure in Normal Activities  
Apprehension  
Intense Anger  
Irritability / Agitation  
Apathy / Boredom  
Helplessness  
Feelings of Worthlessness

## **BEHAVIORAL**

Changes in Normal Activities  
Change in Speech  
Withdrawal from Others  
Emotional Outbursts  
Change in Communication  
Suspiciousness  
Agitation / Restlessness  
Substance Abuse  
Antisocial Acts  
Pacing  
Erratic Movements  
Decreased Personal Hygiene  
Diminished Sex Drive  
Appetite Disturbance  
Prolonged Silences

**This information is not intended to serve as medical advice.**

**If you experience physical symptoms which cause you concern, please consult your physician or University Health Services at 850/644.6230**