

## ~ Acute Traumatic Response ~

The Acute Traumatic Response is the response that occurs during or immediately following the traumatic event. The reactions are often noted by trauma responders-- firefighters, police, emergency personnel and by emergency room staff. There are a variety of "normal responses and symptoms"--physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses that can be experienced either during or shortly after a traumatic event. The following physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions are commonly observed during traumatic exposure. It is important to remember that *these responses are not unhealthy or maladaptive responses. Rather they are normal responses to an abnormal event.*

**Note:** Not every response is evidenced by every person.

### Physical Reactions: Acute Traumatic Response

** Difficulty breathing	* Fainting	Pale appearance
** Shock symptoms	* Headaches	Chills
** Chest pains	* Thirst	Cold, clammy skin
** Palpitations	* Dizziness	Increased sweating
* Rapid heart beat	* Gastrointestinal upset	Vertigo
* Elevated blood pressure	Flushed face	Hyperventilation
* Fatigue	Muscle tension & pains	Grinding of teeth
		Twitches

\*\* Require IMMEDIATE Medical Evaluation

\* May need Medical Evaluation

### Emotional Reactions: Acute Traumatic Response

Shock	Helplessness	Irritability
Denial	Emptiness	Depression
Dissociation	Uncertainty	Grief
Panic	Horror	Feelings of Guilt
Fear	Terror	Emotional outbursts
Intense feelings of aloneness	Anger	Feeling overwhelmed
Hopelessness	Hostility	Inappropriate

## Cognitive Reactions: Acute Traumatic Response

Poor concentration	Forgetfulness	Nightmares
Confusion	Self blame	Intrusive memories
Disorientation	Blaming others	Flashbacks
Difficulty in making a decision	Lowered self-efficacy	Questioning religious values
A short attention span	Thoughts of losing control	Feeling as though the world no longer "makes sense"
Suggestibility	Hyper vigilance	Difficulty remembering the event
Vulnerability	Perseverative thoughts of the traumatic event	

## Behavioral Reactions: Acute Traumatic Response

Withdrawal	Reluctance to abandon	Antisocial behaviors
"Spacing out"	property	Increased alcohol consumption
Non Communication	Aimless walking	Inability to attach importance to anything but this event
Changes in speech patterns	Pacing	Refusing to talk
Regressive behaviors	Inability to sit still	Feeling that one should not cry
Erratic movements	Exaggerated startle response	
Impulsively		

### Resources

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