

There is no set time limit to deal with the often troubling reactions to trauma. Many people will recover well, and in some cases this may take many months, or even years.

Whilst people's intentions are to help you, it is important to ask family and friends not to push you, and that you need to deal with the incident at your own pace.

A crucial element that may contribute to how well and how soon people recover from trauma is ensuring that you maintain connected to good friends and family, and be prepared to ask for help from them, or from professionals if you have any concerns or doubts about yourself or what you are experiencing.

RTSSV has professional counsellors who can offer you a safe and supportive space to discuss your concerns. The counselling service is free of charge and operates between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

To make an appointment call 1300 367 797

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria (RTSSV) is a not-for-profit organisation contributing to the safety and wellbeing of Victorian road users. We provide counselling and support to people affected by road trauma, and address attitudes and behaviours of road users through education.

As the only organisation of its kind in Victoria, we provide the following services across the state:

- Free, professional face-to-face and telephone counselling
- Support and training
- Education programs

For more information about what we do, please call us or visit our website.

Suite 2, 109 Whitehorse Road
Blackburn Vic 3130
Tel: 03 8877 6900
Fax: 03 9877 9799
Email: info@rtssv.org.au

1300 367 797 | www.rtssv.org.au

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Coping with trauma and serious injury



Being seriously injured in a road incident is a devastating and often life changing experience.

Initially, much of the focus is placed on your physical health. This experience can be a long and difficult journey. Amidst all the adjustments and struggles of trying to deal with the physical changes, some people overlook the impact of how the incident has affected you emotionally.

Dealing with both the physical changes and the emotional pain may cause you a great deal of distress and confusion.

The information in this brochure deals with emotional trauma – that is how being involved in a crash and being injured has impacted you as a person, your relationships with people in your life and generally your view of the world.

We hope the information will provide you with some basic facts about what you are most likely experiencing.

Common reactions to trauma

After a trauma, people may go through a range of foreign feelings and emotions.

Often people who did not experience the trauma first hand, such as the person first at the scene of an accident, are surprised by the intensity of their responses.

Here is a list of some of the common reactions to a traumatic situation:

Physical

- Nausea
- Upset stomach
- Sweating
- Rapid heart beat
- Increased blood pressure
- Problems sleeping
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Increase in the use of alcohol or drugs
- Tremors
- Easily startled

Thinking

- Slowed thinking
- Disorientation and trouble concentrating
- Memory problems
- Nightmares
- Seeing distressing images of the event in your mind (flashbacks)
- Poor attention span

Emotional

- Sadness or grief
- Anger and irritability
- Guilt
- Shock
- Wanting to be alone
- Anxious and/or scared
- Need to control everyday experiences
- Panic
- Feeling lost and you struggle to find meaning in your life

This list is not exhaustive, but they are some of the typical reactions to trauma.

Here are some helpful tips that may assist keep some of these symptoms under control:

For you

- Spend time with supportive friends
- Talk to someone who will listen to you about how you are feeling
- Get back to your normal routine as soon as you feel able to
- Exercise
- Look after yourself by eating well and not drinking or smoking too much
- Allow yourself to rest and have time for yourself
- Cry
- Write about how you feel
- Meditate

For family and friends

- Spend time with the person when possible
- Listen to how they feel but do not push them to talk. You do not need to give advice, just listen and be there for them
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Resist the urge to say things like 'Everything will be OK', as these sorts of statements are not helpful
- Offer to do some practical tasks such as cooking, collecting children etc