# **Post-traumatic Symptoms**

### **Psychological Reactions: 3+ months post-exposure**

## **Intrusive thoughts**

- ► Recurring, intrusive, involuntary memories
- ► Nightmares
- ► Flashbacks
- ► Feelings of physical/psychological stress when recalling the event



#### **Avoidant behaviour**

- Avoiding thoughts, feelings, or memories associated with the event
- Avoiding places, people associated with the event



# **Mental/Emotional changes**

- ► Dissociative amnesia (memory loss of certain elements of the event)
- ► Feelings of detachment, estrangement from others
- ► Persistent negative emotional state
- ► Loss of interest in important activities



## **Increased reactivity**

- ► Recklessness and self-destructive behaviour
- ► Irritability and angry outbursts
- ► Difficulty falling asleep
- ► Difficulty concentrating
- ► Heightened startle response
- ► Hypervigilance/paranoia





# **Identifying Traumatic Reactions**

#### **Normal Reactions**

0 - 24hrs

#### **Immediate Reactions**

- Shock
- Confusion
- Partial or total amnesia regarding the event



### **Pathological Reactions**

#### within 1 month

# Post-immediate Reactions

#### **Physical**

- Palpitations
- Hypervigilance
- Heightened startle response
- Sleep disturbances

#### **Psychological**

- Feelings of unreality
- Insecurity
- Irritability

Identifying issues and offering support in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events prevents the development of pathological symptoms.

#### **Acute Stress**

#### **Dissociative Symptoms:**

- Feeling disconnected or numb
- Derealization

#### "Reliving" Symptoms:

- ▶ Intrusive memories
- Flashbacks and nightmares
- Hypervigilance
- Distress, helplessness

#### **Avoidance**

 Avoiding triggering memories about the event

#### beyond 1 month

# **PTSD** (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

- Reliving symptoms
- Avoidant behaviour
- Persistence of acute stress symptoms
- Personality changes
- Associated disorders
- Delayed-onset PTSD



# **Responding to Traumatic Reactions**



### **Normal Reactions**

"ALARM" REACTION FIGHT OR FLIGHT





# **Pathological Reactions**





Immediate reactions 0 - 24hrs



Post-immediate reactions
48hrs - 1 month



Acute Stress From 1 month



PTSD From 6 months

### While in danger

- Prioritise your own safety
- ► Calm your breathing
- ► Focus on security procedures

#### **Once safe**

- ► Provide security
- ► Tend to primary needs
- Activate social support systems



# Follow up with a psychologist

- ► Monitor stress reactions
- Regulate emotional, physical, cognitive reactions
- Desensitization process



- Desensitisation treatment (EMDR)
- ► Medication if necessary



TREATMENT

SUPPORT

**PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID** 

