

# Coping with the Anniversary of a Crisis Event



**This handout describes the possible impact you and your co-workers may experience as the Anniversary of a past traumatic event approaches.**

Perhaps it was an accident, terror event or an act of violence, a natural disaster or some other disruptive crisis event that impacted you, your co-workers, and your workplace.

As the Anniversary approaches, similar reactions you may have experienced in the past, may be triggered, creating a sense of stress and anxiety that cannot be understood. Seasonal changes, holiday celebrations, looking at calendars, watching news, smells and sounds are some examples of what can trigger difficult memories of past events. These memories can be accompanied by a range of psychological, emotional, behavioral and physical responses.

## What are some possible reactions?

### Physical

Numbness, headaches, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, nausea, gastrointestinal problems.

### Emotional

Fear, anxiety, distress, anger, irritability, sadness, guilt, distrust.

### Behavioural

Tearfulness, emotional detachment, excessive vigilance, withdrawal or isolation, increased tendency to blame or criticize others, increased consumption of substances.

### Psychological

Difficulty concentrating, confused thoughts, forgetfulness, disturbing dreams/nightmares recurring intrusive thoughts and memories.

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**Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.**

**1-800-663-1142 | TTY: 1.888-384-1152 | International (Call Collect): 604-689-1717**

**Numéro sans frais - en français : 1-866-398-9505**

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## Are these reactions “normal”?

These can be normal reactions when memories of a past traumatic event are triggered. Reactions usually decrease and disappear within a few weeks. Most people recover and return to their normal level of functioning. If however reactions persist beyond a few weeks, you may need the assistance of a mental health professional.

## Do these reactions always occur a year after the event?

Not always. Some individuals experience no triggered reactions as the anniversary approaches.

## FAQs and Tips for Recovery

### Is there any way to avoid these types of reactions?

It may be difficult to avoid them completely. Even individuals who are well-informed and well-prepared, such as professional first responders may have recurring stress reactions in such situations.

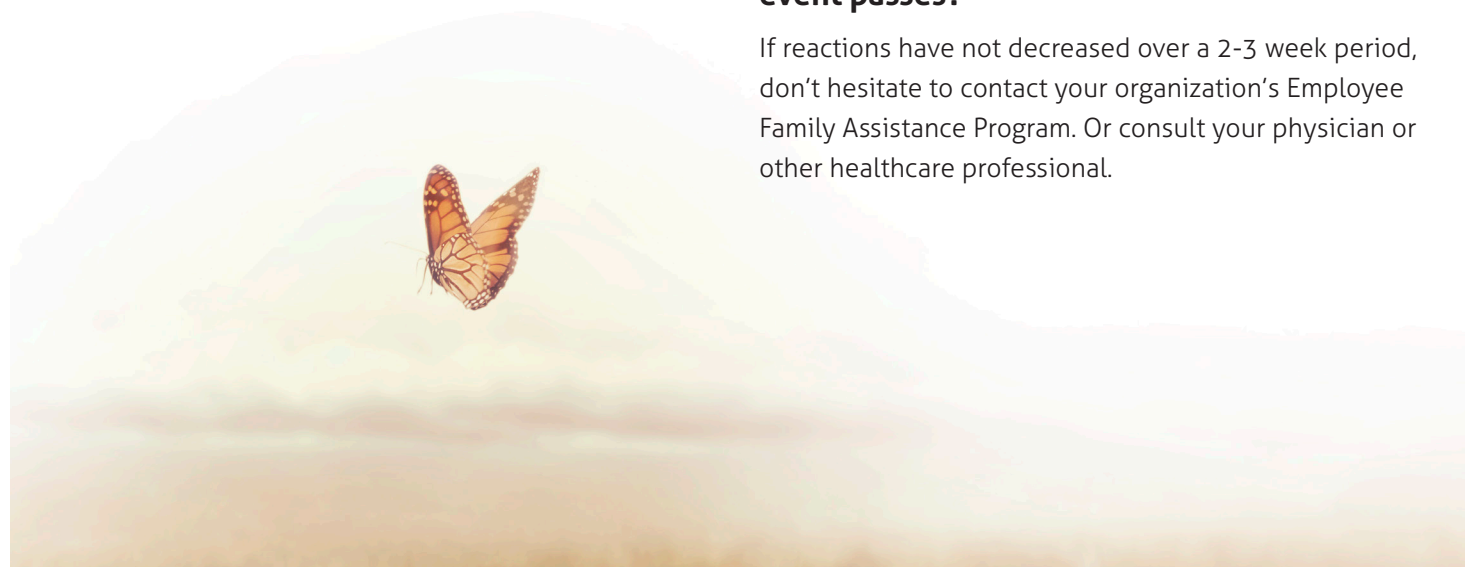
Remember, these are **normal reactions** to a past crisis event.

## What can you do?

- Pay attention to your feelings and reactions as the anniversary of the event approaches
- Avoid self-judgement or self-blame. Self-care is important
- Try to reduce other sources of stress.
- Take the time to talk about your reactions with someone; family, friend, or healthcare professional
- Exercise and physical activity is known to reduce stress
- Engage in stress reducing activities such as leisure activities, hobbies, physical exercise, and social activities .
- Take time to rest and maintain good sleep habits.
- If you are experiencing intrusive memories remind yourself that they are triggers from your past traumatic experience
- If others want to talk about the event and you do not, let them know.

## What should you do if your stress reactions don't diminish as the Anniversary of the crisis event passes?

If reactions have not decreased over a 2-3 week period, don't hesitate to contact your organization's Employee Family Assistance Program. Or consult your physician or other healthcare professional.



**Need more assistance or support?** For more information, to book a counselling session or to access Homewood Health for any additional assistance or support, contact our Client Services Centre available to you 24/7 in English and French. All calls are completely confidential.

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