

# The family outside may identify with the following responses

## What you may experience

### Fear

- of damage to yourself and those you love.
- of being left alone, of having to leave loved ones.
- of 'breaking down' or 'losing control'.
- of a similar event happening again.

### Helplessness

- crises show up human powerlessness as well as strength.

### Sadness

- for injuries and losses of every kind.

### Longing

- for all that has gone.

### Guilt

- for being better off than others, ie being alive, not injured.
- regrets for things not done.

### Shame

- for having been exposed as helpless, 'emotional' and needing others.
- for not having reacted as you would have wished.

### Anger

- at what has happened, at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen.
- at the injustice and senselessness of it all.
- at the shame and the indignities.
- at other people's lack of understanding and inefficiencies.
- "Why me?"

### Memories

- of feelings, of loss or of love for the other people in your life who have been injured or who have died.

### Let down

- disappointment for all the plans that cannot be fulfilled.

### Hope

- for the future, for better times.

### Numbness

- Your mind may allow the misfortune to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly as being 'strong' or 'uncaring'.

### Dreams

- You may find yourself repeatedly dreaming about what happened.

## Physical Symptoms

- After a profound shock you may find you experience symptoms such as loss of appetite, difficulty in sleeping or exhaustion. These usually pass, but consult your doctor if they persist.

## Accidents

- This may become the main thing that you think about for a long time. The stress of this and the lack of ability to focus on the here and now may make you more accident-prone.

## Alcohol and drugs

- The extra tension may lead you to increase your intake of substances which you feel dull the pain temporarily. It is important to seek help if this is happening repeatedly.

It is common to have some or all of these feelings after a disaster and you may experience them immediately or some time later. The feelings can be very strong and frightening, especially if a arrest was sudden or violent, it can feel as though you are losing control or 'going mad', but for most people the feelings become less intense over time.

Many people find that crying can give relief but it is also common to have other responses, such as a desire to be alone.

## When to seek help

- If you feel you cannot handle intense feelings or body sensations.
- If you feel that your emotions are not falling into place over a period of time and you feel chronic tension, confusion, emptiness or exhaustion.
- If, for a long period, you have to keep active in order to avoid painful feelings.
- If you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep.
- If you have no person or group with whom to share your emotions, but you feel the need to do so.
- If your relationships seem to be suffering badly, or sexual problems develop.
- If you have accidents.
- If you continue to smoke, drink or take drugs in excess since the event.
- If your work performance suffers.
- If those around you are particularly vulnerable.
- If as a helper you are suffering from exhaustion.

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