

Common Signs & Signals of a Stress Reaction

You have experienced a traumatic event. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common and quite normal for people to experience aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes, the emotional aftershocks (for stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear. The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last days, weeks, months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support from your co-workers, family and friends, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be helpful. This does not imply mental illness or weakness but it simply indicates that this particular event was just too powerful to manage without appropriate assistance.

If you have physical symptoms which cause you concern, contact your physician.

Common Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction			
Physical	Mental	Emotional	Behavioral
Fatigue	Tendency to Blame Others	Anxiety	Changes in Normal Activities
Insomnia	Confusion	Survivor Guilt/Self-Blame	Change in Speech
Muscle Tremors	Poor Attention	Grief	Withdrawal from Others
Twitches	Inability to Make Decisions	Denial	Emotional Outbursts
Difficulty Breathing	Heightened or Lowered Alertness	Severe Pain (Rare)	Change in Communication
Rapid Breathing	Poor Concentration	Fear of Loss/of Going Crazy	Suspiciousness
Elevated Blood Pressure	Forgetfulness	Uncertainty	Inability to Rest
Rapid Heartbeat	Trouble Identifying Known Objects or People	Loss of Emotional Control	Substance Abuse
Chest Pain	Increased or Decreased Awareness of Surroundings	Emotional Numbness	Intensified Startle Reflex
Headaches	Poor Problem-Solving	Depression	Antisocial Acts
Visual Difficulties	Loss of Sense of Time, Place or Person	Lack of Capacity for Enjoyment	Pacing
Nausea	Disturbed Thinking	Apprehension	Erratic Movements
Thirst	Nightmares	Intense Anger	Decreased Personal Hygiene
Hunger	Inescapable Images	Irritability	Diminished Sexual Drive
Dizziness	Flashbacks	Agitation	Appetite Disturbance
Excessive Sweating	Suicidal Ideas	Helplessness	Prolonged Silences
Chills	Disbelief	Mistrust	Accident Prone
Weakness	Change in Values	Feelings of Worthlessness	
Fainting	Search for Meaning	Apathy/Boredom	