Recognizing the Impact of Trauma

How can you understand your feelings in a state of crisis?

Crises and traumatic experiences can cause a variety of strong emotional reactions that can impact how you function in your day-to-day.

Regardless of how directly or indirectly connected you are to the circumstances, it's important to validate your experience:

- Honor your emotions.
- Don't compare yourself or your experience to others.
- Treat yourself with compassion during difficult times.

Traumatic events can affect everyone differently, but there are some common reactions you might notice.

At first, you might feel shocked, numb to the situation, and feel out of touch with reality. You might also feel scared, a sense of dread, and exhausted.

As time passes, you may start feeling more grounded and emotionally stable, but still experience periods of extreme emotional difficulty. This can feel unsettling, but remember that it's common for people processing trauma. Over time, these feelings will decrease in intensity and frequency.

Here are some ways your body and mind may be impacted:

- feeling exhausted for no known reason
- difficulty sleeping through the night
- lack of energy for normal activities
- difficulty concentrating on or remembering everyday tasks
- feeling that your normal demands of work and home are overwhelming
- becoming easily irritated by little things, such as noise
- misuse of alcohol or drugs, particularly in reaction to difficult emotions or for help in falling asleep

During this time, remember to take care of yourself.

Physically: eat nutritious foods, move your body in a way that feels good to you, get plenty of rest even if you're struggling to sleep, be mindful about your drug and alcohol use.

Emotionally: engage in activities you enjoy, spend time with loved ones, talk to others who have had similar experiences, reach out to spiritual/ religious leaders or doctors to discuss your wellbeing, and remember to be kind to yourself. You're doing the best that you can.

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