

Healing from Trauma

Trauma symptoms typically last from a few days to a few months, gradually fading as you process the unsettling event. But even when you're feeling better, you may be troubled from time to time by painful memories or emotions — especially in response to triggers such as an anniversary of the event or something that reminds you of the trauma.

Tip 1: Get moving.

Trauma disrupts your body's natural equilibrium, freezing you in a state of hyperarousal and fear. As well as burning off adrenaline and releasing endorphins, exercise and movement can actually help repair your nervous system. Try to exercise for 30 minutes or more on most days. Or if it's easier, three 10-minute spurts of exercise per day are just as good.



Tip 3: Breathe.

No matter how agitated, anxious, or out of control you feel, it's important to know that you can self-regulate your arousal system and calm yourself. Not only will it help relieve the anxiety associated with trauma, but it will also engender a greater sense of control. If you are feeling disoriented, confused or upset, practicing mindful breathing is a quick way to calm yourself. Simply take 60 breaths, focusing your attention on each "out" breath.



Tip 2: Don't isolate.

Following a trauma, you may want to withdraw from others, but isolation only makes things worse. Connecting to others face to face will help you heal, so make an effort to maintain your relationships and avoid spending too much time alone. You don't have to talk about the trauma. Connecting with others doesn't have to involve talking about the trauma. In fact, for some people, that can just make things worse. Comfort comes from feeling engaged and accepted by others.



Tip 4: Stay healthy.

It's true — having a healthy body can increase your ability to cope with the stress of trauma. Get plenty of sleep. After a traumatic experience, worry or fear may disturb your sleep patterns. But a lack of quality sleep can exacerbate your trauma symptoms and make it harder to maintain your emotional balance. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day and aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.



— Adapted from *helpguide.org*