



EARTHQUAKE POST TRAUMA STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR IMPACTED EMPLOYEES

The tragedy on 12th May, 2008 by the most powerful earthquake in 30 years has brought much death, injury and destruction. It was traumatic to victims as well as witnesses to this unexpected disaster.

Human Dynamic is ready to support you & your families who have been touched by this distressing event. We have ready counselors able to offer crisis support round the clock - help is just a call away. The following information may be helpful to you to manage the trauma.

INFORMATION SHEET:

Whether a person personally experiences or witnesses a traumatic event that involves actual or threatened death or injury, s/he is likely to develop unusually strong emotional reactions. **It is important to know that these reactions are Normal reactions to an Abnormal or traumatic event.**

These reactions may sometimes interfere with the ability to function either during the event or later. They may appear immediately after a traumatic event, a few hours or even days later. For some, it may even take weeks or months to surface.

Depending on the severity of the event, these stress reactions may last anywhere from a few days to a few months or longer. With proper support and understanding, these stress reactions usually pass more swiftly. It is important to seek help early from professional counselors. Such assistance does not imply “weakness” or “craziness”, - it just means that the event was too powerful for you to manage by yourself.

Common signs and signals of stress reaction include:

Physiological or Bodily Stress Reactions

- Rapid or Irregular Heartbeat and Palpitation
- Shortness of breath, sweating
- Increased blood pressure
- Shaking, dizziness, tremors or restlessness
- Muscle tension
- Headache
- Nausea, stomach distress and/or Diarrhea



- Frequent urination
- Poor or interrupted sleep
- Disturbances to menstrual cycle
- Change in sexual functioning
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Teeth grinding

Emotional Stress Reactions-

- Feeling anxious and worried
- Feeling Fearful and tearful
- Feeling helpless & guilty
- Disbelief, denial or bargaining
- Irritability, agitation and anger
- Mood changes and depression
- Lacking in emotional responsiveness - shock, numbness
- Feeling detached from others & showing a restricted range of affect (e.g. inability to show love or kindness)
- Feeling hopeless, insecure

Perceptual & Cognitive-

- Reduced awareness of surroundings (e.g. in a daze)
- Poor concentration, forgetfulness and confusion
- Perceiving things as unreal or as unrelated to self
- Experiencing repeated images related to the trauma like nightmares, illusions, flashbacks or intrusive thoughts
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- Difficulty making decision or solving problems
- Heightened alertness and being easily startled by sounds or movements
- Sense of foreshortened future (e.g. does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

Behavioral-

- Not wanting to be around people, keeping to self
- Avoidance of activities, places or people that remind them of the trauma
- Lack of interest or lowered participation in activities
- Increase in suspiciousness, negativity, blaming others
- Increased smoking or drinking



REGAINING BALANCE

Regaining Balance after a crisis can sometimes be a difficult process. However, with hope and effort, it is possible to turn your self doubt into self worth, your pain into power and your sense of emptiness into energy to move on. The following are some ways that you can help yourself.

➤ **Nurture Your Body:**

Emotional recovery can be delayed by neglected health & supported by caring for your body.

- ◆ Eat moderate quantities of easy-to-digest, health giving food – overeating though temporarily comforting, will end up making you feel worse.
- ◆ Exercise regularly (e.g. walking, tai chi, yoga) – this can boost strength and energy, release tension, help you feel relaxed and lighten your mood.
- ◆ Rest sufficiently – 8 hrs is a good average. Sometimes situations like these can contribute to people sleeping too little or too much.

➤ **Distract Your Mind:**

While it is normal for your mind to wander to thoughts and memories about the event, it may be necessary to temporarily turn away from your pain to help you stabilize emotionally. Distracting your mind when the pain or fear gets too much and building structure into your life are good ways of doing this.

- ◆ Predictable daily routines can provide comfort (e.g. cooking, grocery shopping, doing the laundry, washing the car, clearing out a cupboard etc.)
- ◆ Playing with your children can also be a good distraction.
- ◆ Find out what distracts you and use it so long as it is not harmful to yourself or others.

➤ **Soothe Your Soul:**

Give yourself space and time to heal. Remember that part of the healing process lies in giving yourself permission and time to grieve. Here are some suggestions to try.

- ◆ Meditation, music and nature's beauty can also help. Some people find comfort in attending church, the mosque or temples – others prefer private meditation.
- ◆ Listen to music that helps you lift your spirits.
- ◆ Pets can be a great solace for many – whether a dog, cat, a bird or a fish.



➤ **Relieve Yourself of Unnecessary Pressures:**

Coping with loss, disappointment and anger takes energy – to save and maximize your energy, seek to relieve yourself of unnecessary pressures.

- ◆ Avoid people who depress you or drain your energy by criticizing, whinnying, or gossiping.
- ◆ Seek out and spend time with people who can energize you, are hopeful, have good shoulders for you to lean on and kinds words to share.
- ◆ Turn off the TV/Radio if the news/music depresses you.
- ◆ If work is stressful, ease up at work or ask for re-assignment till you feel better.
- ◆ If managing the house is weighing you down, hire someone to help out for a while or swap chores with someone who doesn't mind such tasks.

➤ **Use Your Social Supports**

- ◆ Talking to others in the same boat can be mutually beneficial as people suffering from the same loss or disappointment can help each other endure hard times.
- ◆ Seek help from family and friends and remember that everyone is probably trying to help even if they do not always say or do the best thing.
- ◆ If you lack a support system or feel too exhausted to try the above techniques, consider seeking the support of a counselor through EAP.