

## How to deal with potentially significant events

### **Resume a normal routine**

A normal routine makes you feel more secure, but take it easy, do not throw yourself into activities or work in an attempt to avoid the unpleasant feelings and memories. Tackle the things that need to be done a bit at a time and count each success.

### **Decision making is difficult**

Avoid making any major life decisions, such as moving house or changing jobs, in the period following the trauma. On the other hand, make as many smaller daily decisions as possible, like what you want to eat or what film you'd like to see. This helps to re-establish feelings of control over your life.

### **Reflecting on what has occurred is vital**

A traumatic event can have an impact on how you see the world, your life, your goals and your relationships. Giving yourself time to re-evaluate what you think and talking to others about it may help.

### **Helping someone else**

You may wish to provide support to others who have been through similar situations, especially as you start to feel better.

### **Club mates are important**

If you have a club mate or friend who has been affected by a major event, you can help by: Recognise they have been through a stressful event.

They may need time and space to acknowledge what they have been through. You can help by offering practical support.

For those directly involved with the incident offer to keep track of developments related to the event so that they do not feel the need to monitor it continuously. While it is important for people to keep informed of the facts, it is not good to focus too much on media accounts of the event.

### **Encourage them to re-establish routines**

Routine helps to restore a sense of order and control in their life. Help them to start with small daily goals and to recognise each success. Equally, don't allow them to throw themselves back into activity as a way of avoiding unpleasant feelings or memories; encourage them to slow down. Being busy isn't always the best. We need reflective time to deal with major incidents

### **Helping them with decisions**

However, don't make decisions for them. Advise them to avoid making any major life decisions in the period following the incident.

### **Encourage them to think constructively**

Help them to plan things that they want to do and to acknowledge their success in coping so far. For example, ask questions such as: "Are there any things that you think would help you to feel better, anything that I can get for you or do for you? Do you have any concerns or problems that we could sort out together? What have you done in the past to make yourself feel better when things got difficult?"

### **Be a good listener**

Your fellow outriggers or a friend might want to talk to you about their experience or feelings. Try to listen. If possible, choose a time and place to talk where you won't be interrupted and when neither of you are rushed nor tired. You might want to reassure the person that emotional pain is to be expected after such events. Even when coping well, things can be hard.

### **Talk to your mate**

Talking itself may be painful and the person may get upset, but this is a natural part of coming to terms with a distressing event. Don't feel that you have to make the distress go away. If it seems like the person has had enough, you can offer to continue another time. After a significant event, talking to someone else who is not critical allows us to process the event so we can convert the tragedy into a learning experience.

Listening is very important, but sometimes it is hard to know how to respond. Don't feel that you have to say 'the right thing'; there is no right thing to say but here are a few pointers:

Listen intently if they talk to you about their experience. Try to work out why they wanted to tell you each particular piece of information. Try to put yourself in their shoes. Don't interrupt, offer only limited examples from your own life, or talk about yourself. Try to avoid offering simple reassurances like "I know how you feel" or "It's all going to be okay".

Gently encourage them to talk, or to continue talking, by asking leading questions like: "Would it be helpful to talk about what happened?"

After listening to what the person has told you, you can show them that you understand by reflecting what they said or re-phrasing the information they gave you. You might start your response with something like: "You seem really...; it sounds like...; did I understand right that you...."

If the person doesn't want to talk about the experience or their feelings, don't force it. Just try to be with them and focus on practical help, and other topics of the conversation. Let them be alone for a while if that's what they want. However, it is a good idea for them not to get too isolated.

### **When to get further help**

Following a potentially traumatic event the majority of people will not need professional help. However, it may be necessary to seek further assistance if initial distress has not reduced after two weeks: if you feel highly anxious or distressed; if your reactions to the event are interfering with home, work or relationships.

Should you need immediate support please contact Lifeline on 13-11-14. Lifeline is a confidential telephone crisis support service available 24/7 from a landline, payphone or mobile. Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can contact Lifeline.

If you've been involved in a major incident at an outriggering event and would like to discuss face-to-face support options please reach out to members of the management committee, details listed at <https://aocra.com.au/>, who will refer you to an appropriate support provider.