

# SOS Détresse

## Trauma

### What is trauma?

Trauma can be defined as a “deeply disturbing or distressing experience”. Anyone can be the victim of a traumatic event, at any time of life. Traumatic events can be linked to the fear of death, such as when the person concerned can’t cope alone, i.e. their **nervous system** is **overwhelmed** and **shuts down**.

Not all injuries result in psychological trauma. The main issue is when the nervous system is overwhelmed, which is also dependent on the individual – as everyone is different, and so our nervous systems cope in different ways.

For some people who experience trauma, it is difficult to return to a “normal” life and they must often seek ways to try to live with their traumatic experience(s).

### What life experiences can be traumatic?

It might be an accident, a serious illness, an assault, the sudden loss of a loved one, and sexual or physical abuse, or negligence, or even abandonment, during childhood. This is an experience we suffered **personally** or to which we were **witness**.

### What are the normal reactions to such exceptional circumstances?

To understand what happens during a traumatic event, you have to watch what happens from a neurobiological perspective. Following the secretion of **stress hormones**, our brains treat extremely traumatic experiences differently to “normal” events. Often, recurring negative feelings, memories or unpleasant physical sensations ensue, which may be due to the assimilation of traumatic experiences.

As humans, we react to serious life events in a particular manner. The reactions can be very diverse:

- Certain people go into shock, turn white, are physically sick
- Some people are simply stunned; no real reaction, except paling of skin, mouth hanging open
- Others, however, behave in an apparently normal manner; they carry on as usual.
- While yet others show sharper reactions, such as pain, sadness, or anger

In general these symptoms disappear after a few days. It may be the case that in some people these symptoms will settle permanently. They may also suffer:

- From intrusive memories, often in the form of dreams
- From reliving the event, a waking nightmare
- From the avoidance of anything that reminds them of their fear
- Increased anxiety and irritability
- A stupor, making them insensitive.

**If a person is suffering heavily from all of the above, and these symptoms persist beyond three months, the person should seek help.**

A physical injury can heal faster, if it is treated straight away. It is the same with the psychological wounds. The only way to resolve the symptoms is to work on the traumatic experience. In general, it is more often than not necessary to seek to professional advice.

## **What you can do for yourself**

Firstly, it is important to understand how you feel after a dramatic event. If you are unable, for example, to manage to relax, or if you feel you must review the same pictures and information all the time, you are not crazy either. **You suffer from posttraumatic symptoms!**

**Seek help from family or friends.**

**Do not isolate yourself, even if it is difficult to open up.**

**Educate yourself, on the possibilities of therapy also.**

If you have been suffering with posttraumatic stress for a long time, it is important to determine if you can live with these symptoms or if you would like to confront the memory during a safe and secure therapy session.

## **Professional help**

If you seek professional help, it is important to contact a therapist who has specialized training in trauma.

**The goal of this therapy is to undo the neurophysiological blockage so that a good psychological assimilation can be implemented.**