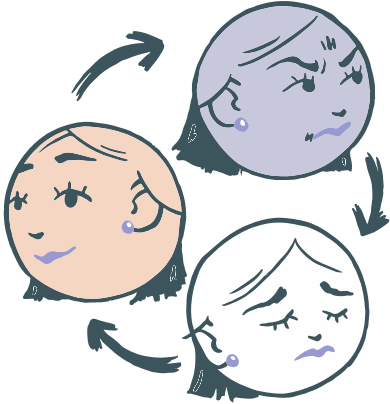


UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL STRESS



Emotional stress is a person's response to an experience or an event that they feel is disturbing or life-threatening. Shock or trauma is very common and can be experienced by anyone, including children.

EMOTIONAL STRESS CAN HAPPEN IF:

- A person survives a car crash and is scared to drive.
- Someone is shot at a park festival and they become scared of going to events at the park.
- A transwoman is called names at a concert and now has panic attacks in crowds.
- A kid is bullied in class and skips school to avoid their bully.



THE IMPACTS OF EMOTIONAL STRESS

Everyone responds to stress differently and reactions often cannot be controlled. When someone senses a threat, our brains are created to keep us alive with three survival responses: fight, flight, or stop.

Our three main survival responses:



fight



flight



stop

Many survivors of emotional stress blame themselves or feel judged by others for the way they responded to an event. It is important to understand you did what you had to do to survive, and what happened is not your fault.

Emotional stress may cause the following:



I feel...

- Numb and detached
- Anxiety or severe fear
- Guilt or shame
- Sadness/depression
- Helplessness/denial
- Emotionally sensitive
- Fearful of crowds, or being alone
- Self-conscious, suicidal



My body experiences ...

- Insomnia
- Sweating or shivering
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Physical sensitivity
- Increased heartbeat, breathing, blood pressure
- Increased stress
- Frequent illness, body pains and problems
- Extreme fatigue or exhaustion
- Nightmares

I behave by...

- Isolating
- Difficulty concentrating
- Avoiding certain places, crowds or activities
- Sudden outburst of anger/rage
- Being easily startled
- Change in appearance
- Less Trust
- Less interest or participation in daily activities
- Risky behaviors

Calming techniques for everyone

When we feel emotional stress, it is important to bring ourselves back into the present so that we can remember that we are safe, calm and not back in the past.



Drink a glass of water



4-7-8 breathing

Breathe in for 4 seconds. Hold the breath for 7 seconds. Exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat



Five-finger breathing

Hold one hand in front with your fingers spread out. Trace the outside of your entire hand with the index finger of your other hand, taking your time, breathing in when you trace up a finger, then out when you trace down.



Count backward by 3

Slow your thoughts by counting backwards by three from 100. (100, 97, 94, etc.)



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

Find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.



Do a creative project

Write in a journal, play with clay, paint, or draw. It doesn't have to be good! Just enjoy the process.

Healing is possible

Healing after experiencing a traumatic event is possible. Healing is an ongoing process. It may not happen quickly and it may be harder some days than others. There are people who care and want to help. A resource guide can be found both attached to this document and at the link: bit.ly/3DxztUm