

# Common Responses to High Stress and/or Trauma

Self Test: Put a check beside the responses that describe you.

After experiencing a traumatic event, or in response to cumulative stressors, it is common -- and normal -- to experience a wide range of emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual reactions. These responses may appear immediately after the event(s) *or some time later*. **These are normal reactions to abnormal situations.** The following are some of the most common responses:

Emotional	Cognitive (Thinking)	Behavioral (doing)	Physical	Spiritual	Societal Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Terror</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Panic / Paranoia</li> <li>• Anger / Rage</li> <li>• Apprehension</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Vengefulness</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Grief</li> <li>• Emotional shock</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Loss of emotional control</li> <li>• Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness</li> <li>• Feeling numb</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• COURAGE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Hyper-vigilance</li> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Flashbacks</li> <li>• Overly sensitive</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions, spacey</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Shortened attention span</li> <li>• Critical, blaming</li> <li>• Poor problem solving and abstract thinking</li> <li>• Preoccupied with the event(s): inability to recall all or parts of the event</li> <li>• Disoriented to person, place or time</li> <li>• Heightened or lowered awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Self harm</li> <li>• Overwork</li> <li>• Antisocial acts</li> <li>• Inability to rest, pacing</li> <li>• Hyper-alertness</li> <li>• Erratic movement</li> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Change in speech patterns</li> <li>• Increased alcohol/drug use</li> <li>• Avoiding places related to the event</li> <li>• Difficulty writing or talking</li> <li>• Impaired sexual functioning</li> <li>• Loss or increase of appetite</li> <li>• Feeling clumsy</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• CARING FOR OTHERS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thirst/dry mouth</li> <li>• Twitches</li> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Weakness</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• High BP</li> <li>• Rapid heart rate</li> <li>• Muscle tremors</li> <li>• Visual difficulties</li> <li>• Nausea/diarrhea</li> <li>• Shallow breathing</li> <li>• Dizziness or faintness</li> <li>• Chills or sweating</li> <li>• Easily startled</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Changes in appetite</li> <li>• Sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Grinding teeth</li> <li>• Inability to rest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emptiness</li> <li>• Loss of meaning</li> <li>• Doubt</li> <li>• Feeling unforgiven</li> <li>• Martyrdom, feeling punished</li> <li>• Looking for magic</li> <li>• Loss of direction</li> <li>• Cynicism</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Needing to “prove” self</li> <li>• Alienated</li> <li>• Mistrust</li> <li>• Crisis of faith</li> <li>• GROWTH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Silence/impaired communication</li> <li>• Aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Lack of empathy</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Low energy/low productivity</li> <li>• Inflexibility</li> <li>• High rates of alcoholism, drug abuse</li> <li>• High rates of (untreated) mental health issues (depression, sexual dysfunction, etc)</li> <li>• High rates of stress-related health issues (and medication use)</li> <li>• Intergenerational transmission of pain</li> <li>• SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WISDOM</li> </ul>