

Tips for Adults after a Disclosure

| Reactions/Behaviors | Responses | Examples of Things To Do & Say |
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| <p>High anxiety/arousal: Tension and anxiety are common after a disclosure. Adults may be excessively worried about the future, have difficulties sleeping, problems concentrating, and feeling jumpy and nervous. These reactions can include rapid heart rate and sweating.</p> | <p>Use breathing and/or other relaxation skills. Take time during the day to calm yourself through relaxation exercises. These can make it easier to sleep, concentrate, and will give you energy.</p> | <p>Breathing exercise: Inhale slowly through your nose and comfortably fill your lungs all the way down to your stomach, while saying to yourself, “My body is filled with calm.” Exhale slowly through your mouth and empty your lungs, while silently saying to yourself, “My body is letting go.” Do this five times slowly, and as many times a day as needed.</p> |
| <p>Concern or shame over your own reactions. Many people have strong reactions after a disclosure, including fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, shame about how you reacted, and feeling guilty. It is expectable and understandable to feel many emotions in the aftermath of an extremely difficult event.</p> | <p>Find a good time to discuss your reactions with a family member or trusted friend. Remember that these reactions are common and it takes time for them to subside. Correct excessive self-blame with realistic assessment of what actually could have been done.</p> | <p>When talking with someone, find the right time and place, and ask if it is okay to talk about your feelings. Remind yourself that your feelings are expectable and you are not “going crazy,” and that you are not at fault for the abuse.</p> |
| <p>Feeling overwhelmed by tasks that need to be accomplished.</p> | <p>Identify what your top priorities are. Find out what services are available to help get your needs met. Make a plan that breaks down the tasks into manageable steps.</p> | <p>Make a list of your concerns and decide what to tackle first. Take one step at a time. Find out which agencies can help with your needs and how to access them. Rely on your family, friends, and</p> |

Adapted from: Psychological First Aid: Field Operations 2nd Edition National Child Traumatic Stress Network National Centre for PTSD (2008). www.nctsn.org

community for practical assistance.

Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders.

Be aware that reminders can be: people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day.

When you are reminded, you might try saying to yourself, “I am upset now I am being reminded, but it is different now.

Changes in attitude, view of the world and of oneself: Strong changes in people’s attitude after a disclosure are common, including questioning safety, trust in others, and concerns about one’s own effectiveness.

Postpone any major unnecessary life changes in the immediate future. Remember that dealing with disclosure can increase your sense of courage and effectiveness.

Getting back to a more structured routine can help improve decision-making. Remind yourself that going through a crisis can have positive effects on what you value and how you spend your time.

Using alcohol and drugs, or engaging in gambling or high-risk sexual behavior: Many people feel out of control, scared, hopeless, or angry after a disclosure and engage in these behaviors to feel better. This can especially be a problem if there were pre-existing substance abuse or addiction.

Understand that using substances and engaging in addictive behaviors can be a dangerous way to cope with what happened. Get information about support.

Remember that substance use and other addictive behaviors can lead to problems with sleep, relationships, jobs, and physical health.

Shifts in interpersonal relationships
People may feel differently towards family and friends; they may feel overprotective and very concerned

Understand that family and friends are a major form of support during the recovery period. It is important to understand and tolerate

Do not withdrawal from others because you feel you might burden them. Most people do better after a disclosure to turn to others. Ask your friends and family how they are

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for each other's safety, frustrated by reactions of a family member or friend, or they may feel like pulling away from family and friends.

different courses of recovery among family members.
Rely on other family members for help with parenting or other daily activities when you are upset or under stress.

doing rather than giving advice or telling them to "just get over it."

Excessive anger: Some degree of anger is understandable and expected after a disclosure, especially when something feels unfair. However, when it leads to violent behavior, extreme anger is a serious problem.

Find ways to manage your anger that help you rather than hurt you.

Take time to cool down, walk away from stressful situations, talk to a friend about what is making you angry, get physical exercise, distract yourself with positive activities, or problem-solve the situation that is making you angry.
Remind yourself that being angry may harm important relationships.
If you become violent, get immediate help.

Sleep difficulties: Trouble falling asleep and frequent awakening is common after a disclosure, as people are on edge and worried about adversities and life changes.

Make sure you have good sleep routines.

Go to sleep at the same time every day.
Do not have caffeinated drinks in the evening.
Reduce alcohol consumption.
Increase daytime exercise.
Relax before bedtime.
Limit daytime naps to 15 minutes, and do Not nap later than 4 pm.
