

***Guidelines for Managing the
Psychological Effects of Trauma
in the Workplace***

What to expect following trauma

- Following a traumatic incident people will experience a wide variety of reactions. These will depend upon the nature of the incident, the support received afterwards, and the personality styles and vulnerability of the individuals affected.
- The trauma need not be experienced directly to have an effect. It may be witnessed or learnt about from others.
- Most individuals will show immediate signs of distress, others will have a delayed reaction (perhaps days, weeks, months or longer), and a few may not have major distress.
- People who take charge, comfort others and appear to cope may experience difficulties later.
- The immediate reactions of people to traumatic incidents usually include panic, fear, helplessness, horror, crying, shaking, anger and shock.
- These may then give way to feelings of despair, hopelessness and guilt followed by detachment, emotional numbing and an absence of emotional responsiveness.
- Later there can be recurrent and distressing recollections (flashbacks) and dreams about the event, intense reactions to symbols or resemblance's to it, persistent avoidance of anything connected to the trauma, a chronic state of generalised anxiety and impairment in social or occupational functioning.

What to do following trauma

- It is very important to try not to experience panic yourself. Remaining calm whilst witnessing others in distress is difficult, but necessary and vital. It is the only way you can properly help.
- Remember people in distress need others to think about the kind of help they require. They often cannot think for themselves.
- The first step is to ensure any appropriate emergency services are notified and given clear information about the nature of the trauma, number of people affected and the location.
- If you need help at this point, request assistance from colleagues.
- Where practical, people must be removed from danger, made safe and provided with first aid.
- Next the psychological needs of people should be attended to. They will need comfort, support, reassurance and the opportunity to release of upset feeling in a safe and secure place. Allowing expression of distress, fear, anger and guilt will enable those affected to begin processing what has happened. This may help prevent the development of longer-term problems.
- After people have expressed their initial distress discuss what help they require. There will be different needs, for example some may want relatives to collect them and go immediately home, others may be in shock and need more time before deciding or, occasionally, there may be a major traumatic reaction that requires psychiatric assistance.
- Eventually after people have returned to their homes it may be helpful to 'ring round' to see that they have arrived safely, are being comforted and to offer your encouragement and support to return to work.
- If the trauma took place in the workplace employees may be reluctant to return to it. This is because memories will be revived and the associated emotions return. Supporting people by indicating that their reactions are understood and discussing with them the best way to come back will help. Some individuals will only be able to tolerate brief periods at first.
- Keep in touch with the employees over the coming days and weeks. Ask how they are coping. If they need help, encourage referral to a counsellor with whom they can express and work through any emotional difficulties.

Defusing and Debriefing procedures

- Most employees, most of the time will recover from traumatic stress with the appropriate support, advice and reassurance from managers, family and friends.
- It is not good practice, and indeed it can be counter-productive, to routinely provide trauma de-briefing groups and counselling at the time of the incident. There is some evidence to suggest this may make things worse.
- Employees need to be reminded that there are counsellors available for them to contact confidentially, if they are concerned about their distress.
- If staff particularly request group de-briefing, it should be conducted no sooner than forty-eight hours following the incident. However, it is important the request comes from staff and that it is voluntary. Groups usually meet once, although there can be follow-up, and last for two hours. The group leader provides advice, support and information about trauma. They also facilitate emotional release, working through anger and guilt feeling, and identify people who need further help.
- A small number of people will experience the symptoms of acute stress disorder. These symptoms last a minimum of 2 days and usually resolves within a four-week period following the traumatic event.
- If the symptoms persist beyond four weeks, and cause significant clinical distress that was not present before the event, then it is possible the person may be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and requires specialist therapeutic intervention.
- Mental health professionals trained in the techniques for managing this disorder should only conduct specialist PTSD treatment. Advice must be sought.

Each traumatic incident is unique; therefore these are guidelines only. They do not constitute professional advice. It is important that organisations have disaster management procedures and responsibilities in place before incidents occur.

Dr Andrew R. Arthur
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**Coutts Corecare - Stress Management Training
Workshop/Training Evaluation**

Project: **Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust**

	Q1	Q1(%)	Q2	Q2(%)	Q5	Q5(%)
5. HIGHLY SATISFIED/RELEVANT	1	11%	0	0%	3	33%
4	8	89%	9	100%	5	56%
3	0	0%	0	0%	1	11%
2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
1. HIGHLY DISSATISFIED/NOT RELEVANT	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
No. of Responses	9		9		9	
Average Score	4.1		4.0		4.2	

	Q6	Q6(%)
5. VERY EFFECTIVE	3	33%
4	6	67%
3	0	0%
2	0	0%
1. NOT EFFECTIVE	0	0%
No. of Responses	9	
Average Score	4.3	

	Q3	Q3(%)
1. TOO LONG	0	0%
2. ABOUT RIGHT	9	100%
3. TOO SHORT	0	0%
No. of Responses	9	

	Q7	Q7(%)
1. YES	9	100%
2. NO	0	0%
No. of Responses	9	

Ref	Date	Que: Comments
1	22/05/01	1 Good Organisation
1	22/05/01	2 Maybe actual training packs for us to use with our own people
1	22/05/01	4 Mapping of life V's work, Identification of +ve & -ve aspects, Energy sapping/giving matters
1	22/05/01	5 Extremely thought provoking. Also interesting to see that most people are in the same boat.
1	22/05/01	6 Willing to substantiate points made with examples, which helped my understanding
1	22/05/01	7 Everyone should have the opportunity to attend
2	22/05/01	1 Pre-workshop info came 1 week before course, was adequate
2	22/05/01	4 Thinking about staff's perspective, Listening to group views, Reflecting on above as it affects me.
2	22/05/01	5 Useful and can take info back to work to my home.
2	22/05/01	6 Kept things straightforward and easy to understand, whilst covering most issues fully
2	22/05/01	8 Time well spent, allowing reflection and CRB culture and my own future.
3	22/05/01	4 Practice what I preach, It will be different things for different people, Time to reflect.
3	22/05/01	5 Although I feel my life is in balance it was good to raise the issue to a conscious level and consider others.
4	22/05/01	4 To reward myself when I leave work early, Ask why I need to complete a new priority when the previous has not been completed, Practice what I preach.
4	22/05/01	8 Very good course. It has made me realise I need to think more of myself and not everyone else. That is not a bad thing.
5	22/05/01	4 Use of - energy approach, Cross over of ideas from personal and organisation, To listen more
5	22/05/01	8 Enjoyable and stimulating. Based on reality and therefore very practical
6	22/05/01	4 To reflect on self & own actions and beliefs, To try and understand others priorities, To set solutions in the context of the experience of each workplace.
7	22/05/01	1 Map was not very helpful to a cab driver.
7	22/05/01	4 Plus & minus techniques, Diversity of value (I am as important as anyone else), Bubble diagram of important issues in life.
8	22/05/01	4 Step back and look at things, Energy + & -
8	22/05/01	6 Worked well together and well informed
9	22/05/01	1 Perhaps needed more involvement/discussion with LM as to what expectations would be
9	22/05/01	2 Need little more focus on organisation
9	22/05/01	3 May be 1 more hour to promote discussion.
9	22/05/01	4 Think about + & - energy
9	22/05/01	6 Helping and thought provoking

Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust Post Seminar Evaluation

1) What were your reasons for attending this event and your expectations?

- * To refocus my goals
- * I was sent initially - reason for appointment made - attended because life is at an impasse at work and I don't know where I am going because I don't want to go. I need to put this into perspective with other things that have also occurred.
- * Curiosity, managing life, workbalance.
- * Curiosity about what the trust could offer.
- * Had been working very very hard in terms of time and energy. The manager suggested this course may be a good idea.
- * To learn how to manage work and my home life.
- * Follow on and comparison with NLP day? Is this useful for staff to attend.
- * To improve time keeping skills and to help organise and look at boundaries between private life and work.
- * Sent by manager - ask to attend - to achieve balance.

2) Please say how far the event met your expectations

- * Very good
- * The course has met my expectations - it viewed prompted thought in some very difficult areas.
- * I would like to discuss this at the follow-up day.
- * I'd rather wait until evaluation day to say but it would seem that we all can take something back
- * Better than expected very interesting and ideas which may be implemented in reality
- * Looked at stress at work and home in a positive way instead of a negative light.
- * I didn't know what to expect. Felt may be more time would have been spent on strategies
- * Has been a good day to organise thoughts and motivate for change.
- * Well, as it gave a picture of how I have to plan this balance.

3) What were the most interesting and useful topics covered?

- * The zone theory and I will try to apply it
- * All of the aspects very very interesting looking at the balance in particular
- * Zones/Energy
- * Zones/Energy
- * Focusing on yourself in terms of 'the zone' (your optimum present state)
- * The whole session
- * Useful to identify life balance
- * Topic about distractions in every day life and to maintain focus.
- * Negative + Positive aspects of life.

4) What were the least interesting and useful topics covered?

- * Least - Zoning useful positive + negative of life.

5) Please indicate how you plan to use the information from this event, giving specific examples wherever possible (e.g. sharing with colleagues, agreeing an action plan with manager etc)

- * Include a slot in the team away day. Share the day with the managers in the hope that this can be extended to others in the department.
- * I have some pain areas to look at about my life using the balance and zone. I hope to be able.
- * Sharing with team members working on one specific area feedback

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- * Feedback immediate team
- * Helping handling day to day work pressure & stress, Giving some useful advice to friends & colleagues
- * Sharing with work colleagues and sharing information learning to use these skills at home and helping partner to do the same as he works for the Trust as well.
- * Need to think about this. One idea to get staff to attend these days laid on better than multifunctional 'stress management day'
- * Action plan to improve performance and sort out what boundaries to put between work and private life.
- * Share with colleagues - personal plan see manager

6) Would you recommend this event to colleagues

- * Yes x 9

7) Did you discuss this event with your manger before attending?

- * Yes - briefly
- * No - I was sent by higher manager
- * Yes
- * No - As part of my job, did not think about it would have been helpful in hindsight
- * Yes - briefly
- * Yes
- * No - I am a manager - decided to do this for myself.
- * Yes
- * No

8) Please add any further comments you may have:

- * This course came at a particularly busy/hectic/stressful time in my life (both at work and home). It has helped me re-focus. It was good to have everyone from different situations.
- * I could have done with this a year ago.
- * Break facilities could have been better i.e. refreshments
- * Confidentiality to be stated at beginning - thought provoking to raise self-awareness
- * One of the most useful courses Portsmouth Health Care+A24 have run.
- * This course is very positive and empowering - thank you.
- * Sorry bleeper interrupted session
- * Very helpful
- * Did not achieve personal plan