

- **TAKE REGULAR EXERCISE** to combat the impact of trauma on the body. Use aerobic exercise (cycling, walking, jogging etc) to feel more energised and relaxation exercise to calm down (yoga, massage etc).
- **PRACTISE '7-11 BREATHING'** Breathe in for a count of 7 and out for 11. Repeat 20 – 30 times. This stimulates the body's natural de-stress mechanism. It will help you feel calmer fast!
- **LIMIT SUGARY FOOD & DRINKS, COFFEE, CHOCOLATE & ALCOHOL** These can help you feel good initially but in the long run increase your stress.
- **GET SPIRITUAL SUPPORT** through prayer or meditation.
- **GO FOR COUNSELLING** If your reactions have not begun to reduce 6 - 8 weeks after the incident you may benefit from counselling. Contact NOVA to talk about counselling support.

**T:** (028) 3833 5173

**E:** [ni.nova@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:ni.nova@barnardos.org.uk)

NOVA is a Barnardo's N. Ireland trauma support service. It began in 1998 and currently provides a range of supports for children, families and communities. There are three interrelated aspects to NOVA's work:

- **TRAUMA COUNSELLING** for children, families and adults. This service is provided on an outreach basis to people primarily living in counties Armagh, East Tyrone and South Down
- **TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING** in trauma-related issues. This service is available regionally and across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors
- **INFLUENCING AND DISSEMINATION** through publications, conference presentations, and contributions to trauma-related policy and practice

All NOVA practitioners are social workers registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. Some are also qualified counselling psychologists, while others are accredited psychotherapists. In addition, all staff have specialist training in treating trauma in line with current clinical guidelines. As a Barnardo's service, NOVA is committed to ongoing evaluation of all its services.

**NOVA** Trauma Support  
Bocombra Lodge  
2 Old Lurgan Road  
Portadown, BT63 5SG

**T:** (028) 3833 5173  
**F:** (028) 3836 1968  
**E:** [ni.nova@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:ni.nova@barnardos.org.uk)  
**W:** [www.barnardos.org.uk/nova](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/nova)

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trauma  
talk

Information for  
Young People



Why am I feeling like this so long after it happened?

Will I ever feel normal again?

Am I the only one that feels like this?

I want to talk to my friend about it, but then the moment comes and I just don't feel up to it...

I just don't sleep the way I used to and I'm still having bad dreams...

My eating has all changed – I have such cravings for chocolate, coffee, sugary things...

I am having flashback memories... I sometimes feel numb and confused as well... it's like I've become a 'worry expert'...

My head hurts... I feel sick too... I feel tired...

I tend to avoid reminders – places, people, situations...

There are times when I feel really panicky and on edge... I get angry a lot too since it happened and over the smallest things...

I don't trust people the same any more...

I just can't be bothered... Why?

These are just some of the things that young people ask or tell us about after a trauma.

## BUT WHAT IS A TRAUMA?

A trauma is any experience where you feel overwhelmed, terrified or helpless. When a trauma happens you cannot rely on your usual ways of coping. Your mind cannot take in what has happened and keeps you on 'red alert' for fear it will happen again.

## HOW DO PEOPLE REACT AFTER A TRAUMA?

Trauma affects people in lots of different ways.

It can affect your body...  
thoughts...  
feelings...  
behaviour...  
relationships...

**It's important to remember - these are all normal reactions to abnormal events.**

They are the mind's and body's way of **protecting** you from an overwhelming experience.

## Coping with Trauma

Most people recover after a trauma with the support of family and friends. Reactions usually begin to reduce between 6 and 8 weeks after the event. Below are some of the ways people have found useful in helping themselves cope. Not every method suits everyone! Try the ones that suit you best.

- **CONNECT WITH PEOPLE YOU TRUST** Talk about how you feel.
- **KEEP A DAILY ROUTINE** It helps you feel more in control.
- **KEEP A SLEEP ROUTINE** Use hot baths, essential oils, breathing exercises, yoga, reading or listening to relaxing music.
- **KEEP TO ONE STEP AT A TIME** Don't pressurise yourself.
- **KEEP A JOURNAL** Record your thoughts and feelings. Research shows it can help you feel more in control.
- **ENJOY HUMOUR** When appropriate, humour helps you see things differently.
- **GET INTO 'THE BIGGER PICTURE' OF LIFE** Listen to your favourite music, watch a good movie, enjoy a walk in nature to chill out.