

EST • AT YOUR OWN PACE • CONNECTED  
CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY • UNDERSTANDING • NO  
ED • FREE • A SPACE TO BE WHO YOU ARE  
SAFE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY  
• UNDERSTANDING • NON JUDGEMENTAL  
RESPECT • AT YOUR OWN PACE • CONNECTE  
• I HEAR YOU • UNLIMITED • FREE • A SPAC  
TO BE WHO YOU ARE • SAFE • TRUST



# Common reactions to trauma

1300 367 797 | [rtssv.org.au](http://rtssv.org.au)

PACE • CONNECTED • I HEAR YOU • UNLIMITE  
• FREE • A SPACE TO BE WHO YOU ARE  
SAFE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY  
• UNDERSTANDING • NON JUDGEMENTAL  
RESPECT • AT YOUR OWN PACE • CONNECTE  
• I HEAR YOU • UNLIMITED • FREE • A SPAC  
TO BE WHO YOU ARE • SAFE • TRUST  
CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY • UNDERSTANDIN  
• NON JUDGEMENTAL • RESPECT • AT YOU  
OWN PACE • CONNECTED • I HEAR YOU  
UNLIMITED • FREE • A SPACE TO BE WHO YO  
ARE • SAFE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY  
• UNDERSTANDING • NON JUDGEMENTAL  
RESPECT • AT YOUR OWN PACE • CONNECTE  
• I HEAR YOU • UNLIMITED • FREE • A SPAC  
TO BE WHO YOU ARE • SAFE • TRUST  
CONFIDENTIAL • EMPATHY • UNDERSTANDIN  
• NON JUDGEMENTAL • RESPECT • A  
YOUR OWN PACE • CONNECTED • I HE  
R YOU • UNLIMITED • FREE • A SPACE TO B  
WHO YOU ARE • SAFE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIA  
• EMPATHY • UNDERSTANDING • NO  
JUDGEMENTAL • RESPECT • AT YOUR OW  
PACE • CONNECTED • I HEAR YOU • UNLIMITE

After a trauma, people may go through a range of feelings and emotions.

Often people who did not experience the trauma first hand, such as the person first at the scene of a crash, are surprised by the intensity of their responses.

Here is a list of some of the common reactions to a traumatic situation:

### **Physical**

- Nausea
- Upset stomach
- Sweating
- Rapid heart beat
- Increased blood pressure
- Problems sleeping, vivid dreams or nightmares
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Increase in the use of alcohol or drugs
- Tremors
- Easily startled

### **Thinking**

- Slowed thinking
- Disorientation and trouble concentrating
- Memory problems
- Seeing distressing images of the event in your mind (flashbacks)
- Poor attention span

## Emotional

- Sadness or grief
- Anger and irritability
- Guilt
- Shock
- Wanting to be alone
- Anxious and/or scared
- Need to control everyday experiences
- Panic
- Feeling lost, and you may struggle to find meaning in your life or feel that the world is no longer safe

This list is not exhaustive, but they are some of the typical reactions to trauma.

Here are some helpful tips that may assist keep some of these symptoms under control:

## For you

- Spend time with supportive friends and family
- Talk to someone who will listen to you about how you are feeling
- Get back to your normal routine as soon as you feel able to
- Exercise
- Look after yourself by eating well and not drinking or smoking too much
- Allow yourself to rest and have time for yourself
- Give yourself permission to cry
- Write about how you feel
- Meditate

## **For family and friends**

- Spend time with the person when possible
- Listen to how they feel but do not push them to talk. You do not need to give advice, just listen and be there for them
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Resist the urge to say things like 'everything will be OK', as these sorts of statements are not helpful
- Offer to do some practical tasks such as cooking, collecting children.

## **Additional support**

Whilst people's intentions are to help, it is important to ask family and friends not to push you, and that you need to deal with the incident at your own pace.

There is no set time limit to dealing with the often troubling reactions to trauma. Many people will recover well, and in some cases this may take many months, or even years.

A crucial element that may contribute to how well and how soon people recover from trauma, is ensuring that they remain connected to good friends, family and the community. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Seek help from professionals if you have any concerns or doubts about how you are coping or what you are experiencing.

## Our organisation

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria provides free counselling, information and peer support programs to more than 3,000 Victorians impacted by road trauma every year.

We are committed to educating the community and raising public awareness about road trauma and how it affects people's lives. We do this by addressing the attitudes and behaviours of road users through education.

## Our counsellors

Our counsellors are specially trained to help people manage the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with road trauma.

Counselling sessions are free of charge, confidential and unlimited in number for anyone affected by a collision on the roads (or involving any public transport), whenever this may have occurred. Sessions may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone.

Our clients include bereaved families, friends and colleagues; injured people and carers; drivers and passengers; and people who were first on scene – witnesses, citizens who offered assistance, and emergency service workers.

You do not need a referral to access our services. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. To make an appointment, please call **1300 367 797**.

## Our community

Here are some ways to help and connect with people affected by road trauma:

- Tell your family and friends about the free counselling services at Road Trauma Support Services Victoria.
- Like us on Facebook, follow us on Instagram and Twitter, or join our mailing list.
- Join us at our annual Shine a Light on Road Safety community walk or Time for Remembering ceremony.
- Come along to our free monthly Art Therapy Group (no art/craft experience necessary).
- Get involved in shaping our future by becoming a member of Road Trauma Support Services Victoria.
- Volunteer with us.

## Support our work

The trauma that results from a fatal or serious collision can happen to anyone at any time. Each dollar donated helps us to provide vital services to all Victorians who are impacted. Please consider making a donation today.

We reinvest all funds in our programs and work hard to make sure that the resources entrusted to us are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

**1300 367 797 | [www.rtssv.org.au](http://www.rtssv.org.au)**

