



Counselors Offer Help in Disaster's Aftermath

For most of us, when we are in the middle of a major life stressor, we focus on the most important survival tasks. In the immediate aftermath, we are shocked that we made it through and many of us experience a heart full of gratitude. We are glad to be alive.

Over the next several weeks, the emotional reality of the trauma we survived begins to affect us. Allie Scott, Clinical Coordinator at Shield Bearer, shared her experience working with trauma survivors who lived through rape, crime, fire, traffic accidents and suicides. "Our adrenaline kicks in to help us get through the traumatic event. But after we are safely out of harms way, our emotions tend to take over. Sometimes you will just find yourself crying, sweating or angry with no explanation for it."

The team of trauma specialists at Shield Bearer who have experience working with survivors of sex trafficking, war, and other traumatic events put together this advice for surviving the emotional aftermath of trauma.

Take a huge breath.

Breathing deeply helps your body deal with the chemicals in your body that have been released from your emotional trauma. Studies have shown that deep breathing, meditation, and prayer support your immune system and decrease the effects of stress.

Accept how you feel.

Whatever you are feeling is part of your natural response to the horrible experience you have been through. Give yourself permission to feel what you are feeling. Give yourself grace to be okay with your emotions.

Process your experience.

You need to express what you went through. You can talk to friends, write a journal of your experience, or meet with a professional counselor or faith leader. Not expressing what you have been through causes your thoughts about the event to increase.

Get back to your routine.

Your body and mind thrive on routine. Set your alarm and get back to a normal wake – sleep cycle. Eat meals regularly. Go to work, school or find an activity to do every day.

Discover what you are thankful for.

Gratitude opens up space in your heart to feel something other than negative emotions. Look around to see what you can find to be thankful for. Write the list down, post on social media, or tell a friend what you are happy to have in your life.

Get help if you need it.

You may need to see a professional counselor or physician if you are sleeping or eating too little or too much. If you feel like you do not want to do anything or are having thoughts of a suicidal nature, you need to be assessed by a professional.

Scott added, "Trauma reactions usually include a period where you feel like things are hopeless and will never change. The truth is that if you get help, you will move through this period and hope will reappear."

For more information about Shield Bearer, a Houston based non-profit counseling center and lead agency in the movement to strengthen individuals, couples, and families, visit shieldbearer.org or call (281) 894-7222.