



UNIVERSITY of
BRADFORD

Counselling Service

Shocking or Distressing Events

*Information
and self-help*

What to do after a shocking or distressing event

At some time in our lives we will probably all experience an event that leaves us feeling shocked and wondering how to deal with it. This leaflet aims to tell you what you might expect to feel and where you might find support.

What is a shocking or distressing event?

Examples of such events are;

- someone dying (particularly if this is sudden)
- a physical or sexual assault
- witnessing or being involved in a serious accident

There are many other things that can be shocking-this is not an exhaustive list.

What might I experience after a shocking or distressing event?

You may find you are saddened or shocked but otherwise not particularly affected depending on the type of event and how close or involved you are. However, you might find yourself experiencing some or all of the following responses. These are perfectly normal and to be expected after a shocking or extremely distressing event.

Emotional reactions

- Shock and disbelief
- Anger or blame - Towards yourself or others
- Guilt or shame
- Relief
- Fear and anxiety
- Despair, depression and sadness

Reactions in the body

- Hollow or twisting pain in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest
- Tightness and pain in the throat
- Sensitivity to noise
- Breathlessness
- Disturbed sleep
- Lack of energy

Reactions in the mind

- Poor concentration on studies
- Repetitive thoughts
- Distressing images and memories (flashbacks)
- Nightmares

Where can I get support?

Many people find it's enough to speak to family and friends in the first instance after the event but if you need extra support within the University please contact any of the following, even if it is several weeks or even months after the event:

- If it's affecting your academic work: **Your personal academic tutor** or the **Mental Health Advisors** in the **Disability Service** www.bradford.ac.uk/disability
- To talk confidentially about any aspect of what has happened and how it has affected you: **The Counselling Service** www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling
- If you are unsure what support you need: your **Faculty Welfare Advisor** or the **Students Union Welfare Advisor** ubu-advice@bradford.ac.uk
- If you need to see a doctor: your **GP (doctor)** or **The Student Medical Centre** 01274 371380
- If you would like spiritual or faith based support: the **University Chaplaincy** chaplain@bradford.ac.uk

Please don't forget to be kind to yourself; try to eat properly, get enough sleep and reach out to people.

On-line resources/self-help:

www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling for an extensive range of online information and self-help material.

Contacting the Counselling Service



counselling
@bradford.ac.uk



+44 (0)1274 235750



[www.bradford.ac.uk/
counselling](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling)



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