

TEN COMMON EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA & THEIR SYMPTOMS

REACTION	SYMPTOM
A. SHOCK	1. Dazed, robot-like, calm, hysterical, irrational, has the shakes
B. DENIAL	2. Disbelief, demands details, accuses of lying, minimizes, memory blocks
C. CONFUSION	3. Unable to answer simple questions or to follow instructions, distortions
D. HELPLESSNESS	4. Unable to make decisions, belief of being powerless, loss of autonomy
E. FEAR	5. Trigger response, believes in threat of retaliation, unable to be alone, phobias
F. ANGER	6. Screams, cusses, makes demands, self-destructive acts, hostile to police
G. GUILT	7. Blames self, blames others, believes they caused the assault, "If only" – "I should have" – "Why didn't I/you?"
H. SHAME	8. Embarrassed to discuss, doesn't want anyone to know, self condemnation
I. ISOLATION	9. Withdraws, stays in bed, won't talk
J. DEPRESSION	10. Crying, lethargic, insomnia, no appetite, lack of personal care, apathetic, can become suicidal

** All victims are likely to experience some, if not all, of these reactions to a certain degree, regardless of the type of assault or their own personal characteristics. Other factors influence the severity of the impact.

** All of these emotions are normal and are not indications of emotional instability or lack of credibility.

** The stress of these reactions is compounded because the victim does not understand what is happening or what to expect in the future. They need to be told that they are normal in an abnormal situation.

** The long term impact of these reactions can lead to a total inability to function normally, and even to death.