



Information Sheet: Trauma

What is trauma?

There are two types of trauma - physical and mental. Physical trauma includes the body's response to a threat of serious injury or death, or actual serious injury. Mental trauma is the mind's response to serious threat or injury - either to oneself or to others: often manifesting as painful and frightening thoughts, feelings or flashbacks.

Traumatic events generally come out of the blue. Physical or sexual assaults, sexual abuse, natural disasters or being in a serious car accident are some examples of events that can be potentially traumatic. Sometimes the events following an incident can be even more traumatic than the original event itself e.g. being rescued from a car accident. At other times, traumatic events are more sustained and on-going; for instance, long-term domestic abuse.

What are the symptoms of trauma?

Following a trauma, people may experience a range of emotional, psychological and physical reactions. Some examples include:

- Feeling jumpy, disturbed by sudden noises or movements
- Anger at the injustice of what has happened
- Feeling numb and detached
- Difficulty sleeping – having nightmares or insomnia
- Avoiding people and social situations
- Avoiding things that might remind you of the event (triggers)
- Feeling the need to go over and over the event in your mind (ruminating)

Not everyone reacts to trauma in the same way - different people can experience the same events, but their reactions to them may be different.

What can I do if I believe I am suffering from trauma?

- Contact your doctor to ask for a diagnosis. He or she may refer you to other professional help - including counselling - if appropriate.
- Find out more information on trauma - see below.

What is the difference between trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

When the symptoms of trauma become persistent, recurrent or long-lasting (typically beyond three months after the traumatic event), your GP may make a diagnosis of PTSD.

How CCL can help:

We offer free counselling (typically six sessions) to people, aged 16 and over, in Ryedale and, where appropriate, in Scarborough. We can work with a wide range of issues, including trauma. From October 2012, RCS will be piloting Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) treatment for clients who have received a diagnosis of PTSD from their doctor.

Other sources of information:

'Understanding your reactions to trauma' by Dr Claudia Herbert.

www.helpguide.org/index.htm also has section on trauma and PTSD.

RCS Information Sheets on PTSD and EMDR on our website (see below).