

Common Reactions to Stressful Situations

Here are some common reactions in the four areas where stress usually appears. Be alert for any unusual stress responses and seek professional help if symptoms persist or impact your daily quality of living.



It is common to experience a range of emotions during stressful situations. Although individuals who have a prior history of mental health conditions are especially vulnerable, social isolation and the stressors related to traumatic events can impact anyone. It is important to monitor both the physical and emotional health of you and your family and seek medical and mental health treatment when symptoms arise.

FOUR COMMON STRESS AREAS TO MONITOR

Common Emotional Reactions

You may feel:

- Anxious or fearful
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Frustrated by social isolation
- Angry
- Guilty, even when you had no control over the situation
- Too much unreleased energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone
- Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness

Common Physical Reactions

- Stomachaches, nausea, or diarrhea
- Headaches or other physical pains
- Eating too much or too little
- Sweating or having chills
- Tremors (shaking) or muscle twitches
- Being jumpy or easily startled
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping too much, or trouble relaxing
- Racing heartbeat
- Changes in sex drive
- Sensitivity to noises or smells

Common Behavioral Reactions

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- Using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or even prescription medications to reduce distressing feelings
- Outbursts of anger, feeling irritated, and blaming other people
- Difficulty accepting help or helping others
- Difficulty trusting others
- Problems in school or work
- Wanting to be alone most of the time and isolating yourself

Common Cognitive Reactions

You may experience problems in your thinking, such as:

- Trouble remembering things
- Difficulty thinking clearly and concentrating
- Feeling confused
- Worrying a lot
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty expressing your feelings or listening to others

From 9/11 to today, VOICES helps families and communities heal after tragedy.

Voices Center for Resilience assists communities preparing for and recovering from traumatic events, and provides long-term support and resources that promote mental health care and wellness, for victims' families, responders and survivors.

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