

However, proceed with caution if you also have a physical injury and consult your GP for advice. Most complementary therapies have accreditation boards and councils and we advise that you choose a practitioner who is a member of one of these. As with counselling and psychotherapy you should check the qualifications and accreditation of your complementary practitioner.

**Where can I find support after physical injury, brain injury, burns injury, hearing speech or sight loss, amputation, chronic pain as a result of Troubles-related trauma?** In general, first port of call for these sorts of concerns is your GP, who should discuss with you what options are available to particular needs. Following an amputation, spinal or head injury, you will be referred to rehabilitation services, and your needs regarding for example, prostheses, wheelchairs

and other equipment will be addressed. If you are receiving services from an HSS Trust, ask about Direct Payments. They can give you more control over how the services are delivered. You may wish to consider seeking financial assistance from the NI Memorial Fund.

Your GP can make a referral on your behalf to occupational therapy, physiotherapy, audiology, low vision, psychological therapy, and pain clinic services. Specialist community-based support organisations are listed in the Services Directory.

Your GP can also refer you for a comprehensive assessment of the kind of support you or your family may need. If you have experienced sight, hearing or speech loss, you may wish to consider seeking help from one of the organisations listed in the Services Directory that have particular experience in this area.

**AND FINALLY....** If you need help, even if you are not sure what that help might be, ask for help and persist until you find it.



## How Do I Find Help?



If you are unsure about what this help will be like, talk to your GP or the Trauma Advisory Panel. They will explain it fully. Also ask lots of questions of the person who is helping you. They will be happy to explain about:

- their qualifications
- what will happen
- times and number of appointments
- cost (if any)

If you have any problems, you can call the Trauma Advisory Panel on 028 9055 3958

Contact:

**EHSSB** TRAUMA ADVISORY PANEL

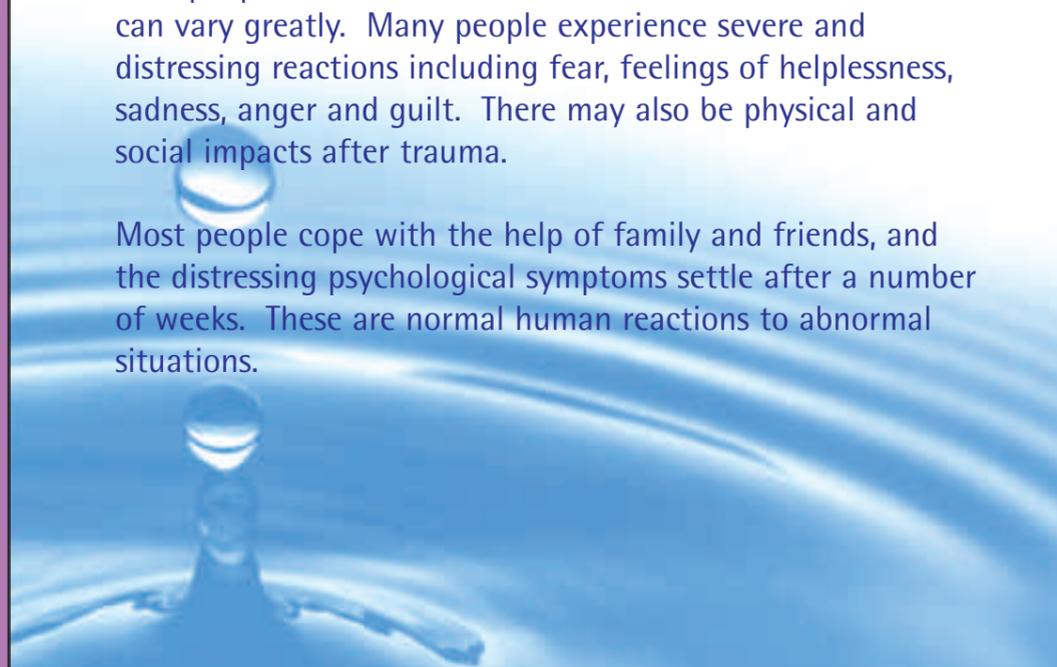
Champion House, 12-22 Linenhall Street, BELFAST BT2 8BS  
 Direct Line: 028 9055 3958 Switchboard: 028 9032 1313  
 email: bdevine@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk website: www.ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk

Services for People who have Experienced

# TRAUMATIC STRESS

How people react to a traumatic event or a series of events can vary greatly. Many people experience severe and distressing reactions including fear, feelings of helplessness, sadness, anger and guilt. There may also be physical and social impacts after trauma.

Most people cope with the help of family and friends, and the distressing psychological symptoms settle after a number of weeks. These are normal human reactions to abnormal situations.



In this document we focus on the needs of people whose problems are persistent and cause disruption to their personal and family life, and how they might be helped.

### Why might I need help?

You might need help if you are having ongoing problems such as those described below:

- Thoughts about the traumatic event continue to overwhelm you in intensity and frequency, making you to feel exhausted.
- You feel you must keep active in order to block out your feelings
- You still feel numb about the event or you sometimes have to pretend it did not really happen at all
- You continue to feel a strong sense of shame or guilt about the event or your reactions to it
- You feel you are becoming increasingly withdrawn from people in social situations
- You are continuing to have difficulties with sleep
- You are becoming more irritable and angry or are low in mood
- Your work performance is suffering
- There is no-one you can really talk to about how you feel

- You find you are drinking and smoking more or using drugs that are not prescribed for you to help you cope
- You are experiencing pain as a result of physical injury
- Your relationships are affected

### What help is available?

There is a growing range of support services and treatments available. These include drug therapy, psychological treatments (talking treatments), complementary therapies and different types of social interventions. Treatments can be used on their own, or in combination, depending on your particular needs. Again, depending on the individual, support may be provided by a counsellor, a psychiatrist, a psychiatric nurse, a befriender or volunteer, a social worker, a psychologist, an occupational therapist or psychotherapist.

**Can my General Practitioner (GP) help?** Your GP may be able to help you to deal with your difficulties without having to refer you on for more specialist support, and some GP practices offer counselling services. However, treatments and support for people who are traumatised are available through general mental health services, which are also accessible through your GP.

**How do I find out about services?** A range of support services is available through the health service, voluntary and community-based organisations, some of which offer specialist provision for individuals and families affected by the trauma of the 'Troubles'. Psychotherapy and counselling, training, befriending and social support are available. You can find a full list in the Trauma Advisory Panel's Services Directory.

### Services For People Who Have Experienced Traumatic Stress

People react in different ways to stressful events. Often people manage with the help of family and friends and through time begin to feel a little better. Sometimes, though, people need more help ... WHY?



**How do I find a Practitioner, and what can I expect from Counselling or Psychotherapy Services?** Many people feel embarrassed about admitting that they have emotional problems. It is important that you do not avoid seeking help for this reason. It can be difficult to focus on other issues at a time of distress, but you should think carefully about the following before visiting a practitioner.

The relationship formed between you and your counsellor must be based on a clear understanding that you have agreed together. With this in mind, you should be clear about **two issues** – the practitioner's qualifications and the service they will provide:

#### \* Ask about the practitioner's qualifications and experience

It is helpful to ask about the qualifications of your counsellor or practitioner and to use only those who are registered and who subscribe to their professional body's recognised code of ethics and professional practice. For example, ask if they are a member of one of the following: British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP),

British Psychological Society (BPS), United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapists (BABCP).

#### \* Be clear about the service to be provided.

A professional practitioner should offer a full assessment of your needs and the opportunity to agree what you hope to achieve by engaging in the work.

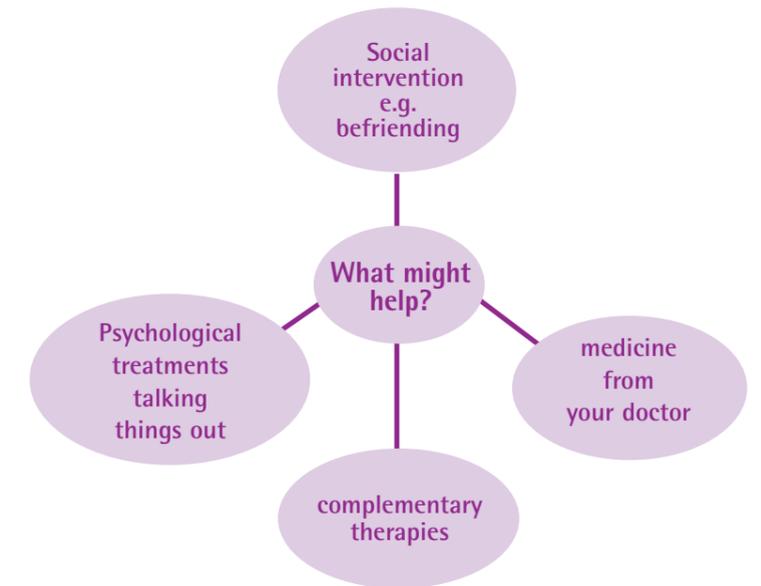
There should be an agreement about the estimated number of sessions you might need, appointment times, cancellation procedures and so on. If you are paying for your counselling, costs and procedures for payment should also be agreed at the beginning.

Good practitioners should also be open and help you to decide if they are the appropriate source of support for you. They should be willing to refer you to a more specialist service if that is what you need.

#### What are Self-help, Listening Ear and Befriending Services and what can I expect from them?

Some people do not need counselling or psychotherapy. However, it can be reassuring to

## What Might Help?



meet with people who have had experiences similar to your own. You may decide that other services – such as a support group, befriending or listening ear – can offer you the help you need. These are sometimes called 'psycho-social' services and should be provided by organisations whose volunteers and bidders are trained 'competent helpers' with skills in Trauma Awareness and Traumatic Grief.

It is important to be aware that this is not counselling. A good competent helper should always be supportive of your needs, and should be able to refer you on to a

more specialist service should you require more specialist assistance.

#### Can Complementary Therapies help and what can I expect from these Services?

A wide range of complementary therapies is now available, and the physical and psychological impact of traumatic stress (e.g. aromatherapy to help relaxation, massage to alleviate muscular pain etc) may be successfully managed through the use of such therapies – particularly in terms of relaxation and stress management.