

10 tips for those in an acute crisis



Introduction

In this guide, you will discover what actions you can take if you find yourself a victim of, or a witness to, a sudden and serious incident.

First, you will be provided with 10 simple tips to employ when confronted with such circumstances. Then, you will have the opportunity to delve in more detail into the definition of an acute

crisis and to explore actions that you may wish to take.

This guide is based on robust research and the fundamental principles of psychological first aid. We hope that it will enable you to act safely, confidently and promptly in a sudden and serious situation.



Dansk Sundhedssikring's 10 tips for those who have endured a severe incident

Immediately after the incident

1. Make sure that you are not alone

You need to feel calm, safe and supported. Make sure you are in a safe and quiet place, away from prying eyes. You may need to be escorted home from the accident site. Regardless of the hour, we recommend that you have someone with you at all times. Contact a support person, if needed.

2. Get help on practical matters

It is very common to have difficulties evaluating situations and making decisions. Get help with, for example, cancelling appointments, making sure the children are picked up from daycare, shopping or contacting other support personnel.

3. Acknowledge your reactions

There is no right or wrong way to respond. We are all different and we all react differently to crises. Allow yourself to have some peace and quiet.

4. Talk about what happened

It is a good idea to talk about what happened - preferably several times - if you feel the need. Focus on the facts and ask questions in order to understand the entire sequence of events. If others have experienced the same shocking accident, it may be a good idea to get together and share your experience.

5. Avoid sleeping immediately after the incident

As far as possible, avoid sleeping during the first six hours after the incident. Likewise, do not take sleeping medication the first night. Sleeping the first six hours after a severe incident can permanently fixate the traumatic memory in your mind for a long time.

The days and weeks after the incident

6. Tell people what you need

People may be unsure of when and how much you need to talk. Express your preferences clearly, since some may refrain from asking about the incident to avoid stressing or upsetting you.

7. Avoid stimulants

Exercise caution with alcohol and sedatives. Increased consumption can hinder your ability to process the incident. It can also increase your risk of addiction.

8. Sleep

You may have trouble sleeping at night. If you get too little or almost no sleep for more than a few days, talk to your doctor about getting short-term sleep medication.

9. Make a viable plan

If you find it difficult to assess when you should go back to work, particularly if the incident happened at the workplace, talk to your manager, HR or your own doctor to develop a viable plan. The plan should include what type of tasks you can realistically start with, a pathway to increase responsibilities, and an agreement of when to evaluate the plan together.

10. Seek additional help, if needed

When should you seek professional help? If you do not notice a significant improvement within the first four weeks after the incident, we recommend that you seek professional help.

What is a crisis response?

A crisis response occurs when one's previous life experience and coping skills are not sufficient to handle a particular situation.

Reactions can vary from person to person. Some are more outwardly oriented, while others are more inwardly oriented. Either is perfectly fine.

Individuals can fluctuate between different reactions. This is the body and mind processing the event/ responses and working to restore balance within the nervous system. This is perfectly normal. It is how one recovers over time.

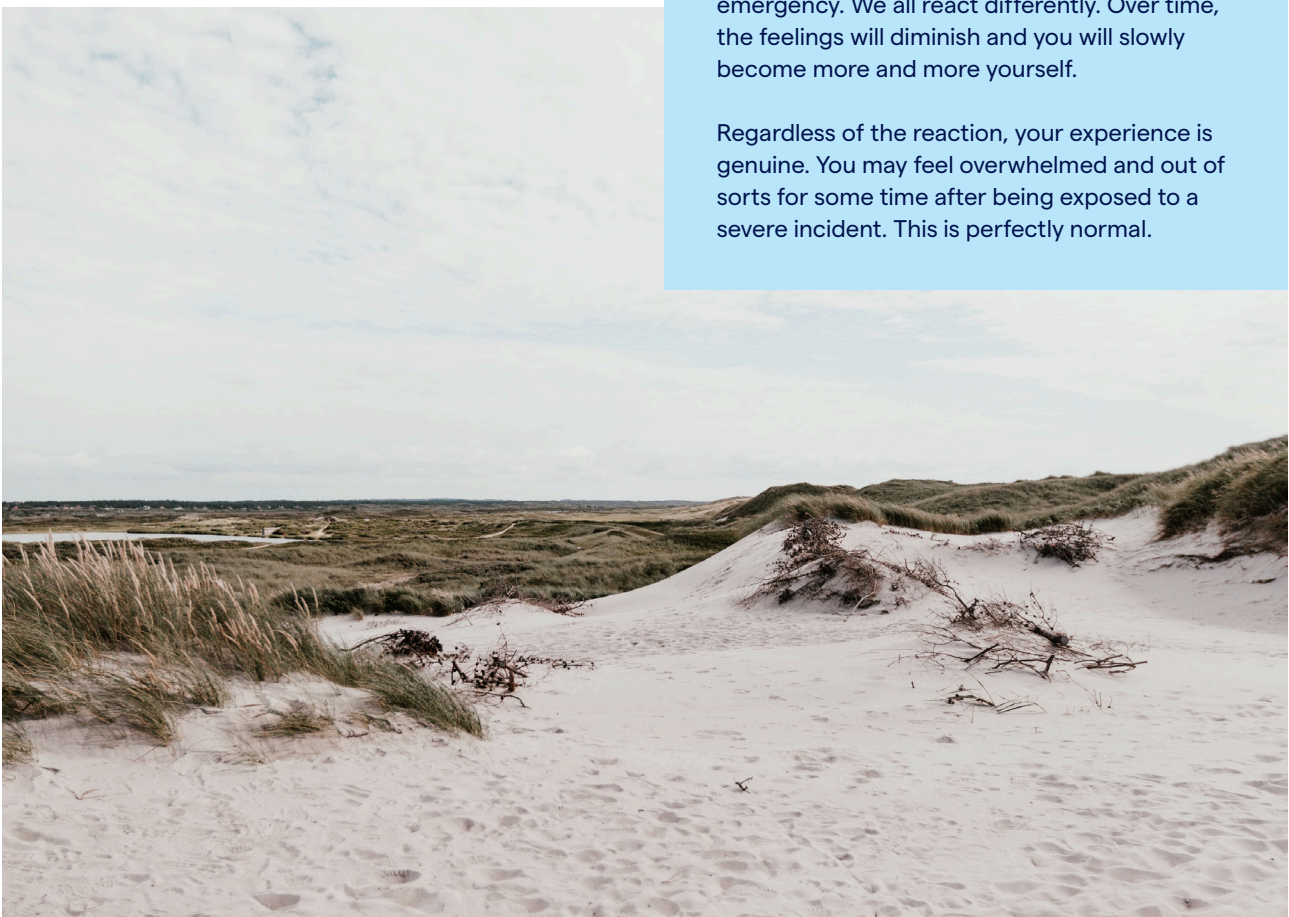
If you experience rigid and fixed reactions that substantially affect your daily life more than 4 weeks after the event, consider talking to your doctor or medical adviser.

Normal crisis responses may include:

- Shock, crying, confusion, racing thoughts, pressure to talk and moments of silence
- Memory impairment, memory gaps and/or decreased concentration
- Fluctuating and intense emotions, interrupted by periods of lack of emotion
- Physical tension, headaches, nausea, poor appetite, sleep problems and fatigue

There is no right or wrong way to respond to an emergency. We all react differently. Over time, the feelings will diminish and you will slowly become more and more yourself.

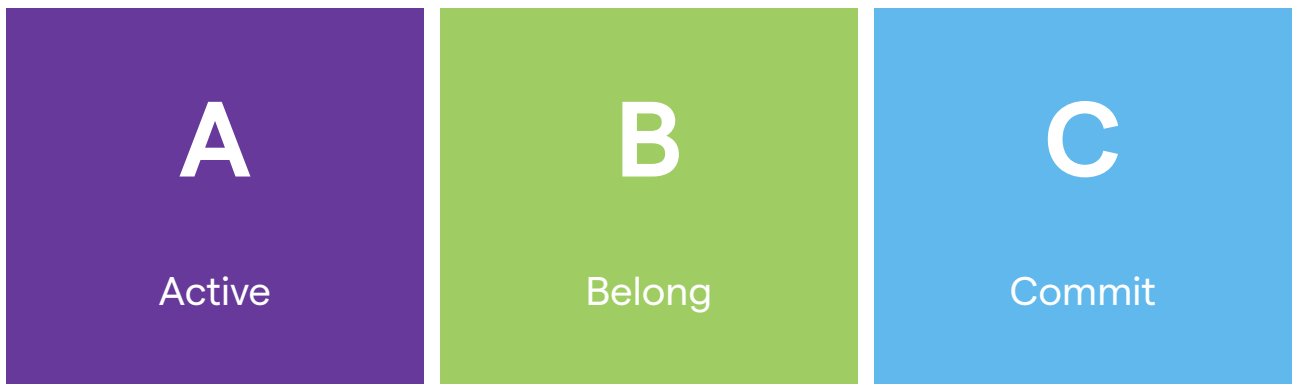
Regardless of the reaction, your experience is genuine. You may feel overwhelmed and out of sorts for some time after being exposed to a severe incident. This is perfectly normal.



The ABCs of Mental Health

Research demonstrates that mental well-being is strengthened when you do something, do something with someone, and do something meaningful. It is called 'The ABCs of Mental Health'. Whether it is a walk, participation in local community sports, creative activities, volunteering or something else is not so important. The key is to do something active, shared, and meaningful.

You can start where it makes the most sense for you. For example, if you feel good when you walk your dog or go for a hike in the woods, actively engage in such an activity to help you recover. Socialising with family and friends can also be valuable and meaningful. It is not so important what you do, but that you do something active that gives you tranquillity, energy and meaning.



You can read more about 'The ABCs of Mental Health' here:
<https://psy.ku.dk/abc/>



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