

Understanding the shock of major events

When we receive significant news such as the injury or death of a family member, colleague or friend, it is normal for us to experience a range of emotions. Feelings of grief and loss associated with a bereavement are to be expected at some level, however it is also common for people to experience reactions of stress, anger, worry, frustration and disbelief.

Absorbing distressing or significant news takes time to digest and you may experience a range of physical, emotional and intellectual responses. Everyone is different and people may experience different reactions at different times.

What are some of the reactions I might have?

In the early stages	After a little time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shock and feeling that things aren't quite real ◆ Feeling alert, energised, and wanting to help out ◆ Feeling distressed and sad ◆ Feeling nervous, stressed, or worried ◆ Unexpected tears ◆ Feeling slowed down and not thinking as clearly ◆ Feeling frustrated about events, or just generally more frustrated ◆ Very aware and/or sensitive to the environment ◆ Feeling physically ill or tense (e.g. headaches) ◆ Wanting to know more information; trying to understand the situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Feeling tired and exhausted ◆ Feeling generally blue ◆ Feeling unmotivated ◆ Feeling alert, energised, and wanting to help out ◆ Getting memories (or flashbacks) of the event or situation ◆ Feeling guilty ◆ Going into review or evaluation mode – sometimes this feels like playing the situation over in your mind and can be hard to switch off ◆ Changes in sleep, diet and health patterns (e.g. less sleep, less eating and less exercise)

The time it will take for you to absorb and adjust to the news will depend on the significance of the news and event, and the closeness of it to you. Don't be afraid to seek help or support to assist you during this challenging time. A close friend or relative, your GP, or a professional support service may be helpful for you.