

# After the shocking experience...

## Picking up the thread again

**In this folder you find information for young people (over 12 years old) that have been involved in a shocking experience or dramatic event.**



If you have been involved in a shocking experience for which you are not prepared, it may have drastic consequences: no one remains unmoved. You may have feelings of incomprehension, anger, but also much pain and sorrow. This folder gives information about what happens in such situations and what may be of help in picking up the thread again.



**GGD**  
Gooi en Vechtstreek

# What are shocking experiences?

It may be an event coming from outside and of short duration that happens to you, but that will nevertheless leave a deep impression on you. Think of the death of someone you are very fond of in your direct environment, or a pet, (sexual) abuse, burglary or threats against yourself and your friends, but also suddenly moving to another town. These are always more or less serious events that give you a feeling of powerlessness and make you lose your grip on your daily life. You may experience reactions that seem strange or unusual; you may feel as if everything has changed all of a sudden, and as if you are watching a film.

## What are possible reactions?

With the first shock just after the event, you may be dazed and not able to understand. It may also happen that you feel nothing at all or stand petrified as if pinned to the ground. It may also happen that you explode with fury and/or are stricken with grief. After some time, you may discover other signs, like:

- Feeling responsible or guilty about what happened, or feeling shame.
- Developing physical complaints, including headaches, stomach aches, listlessness.
- Being unable to concentrate at school.
- Crying or getting angry about mere trifles, being more aggressive or more brazen.
- Troubled sleep or nightmares.
- It may happen that you do not feel like doing anything and want to be left alone, or that you want to forget it all as soon as possible and that you are somewhat more boisterous or more cheeky than usual.
- Perhaps you want to forget it all by smoking more, by drinking or by taking drugs.

All of these reactions are necessary to cope with the event. Everyone reacts differently and these are normal reactions to an abnormal event.

## **To cope with it: how does it work?**

Most important is that you try not to bottle everything up or to keep things to yourself. No matter how shocked or frightened you are: **TRY TO TALK ABOUT IT!** Allow yourself some time for contemplation. The more you let it sink in what happened, the sooner it will wear out. It will relieve your mind and give a less lonely feeling. Take someone into your confidence. It may be just as well to talk with a good friend instead of with your parent or teacher (but they will surely do anything they can to support you in this). Talking about the event and the loss, perhaps even time and time again, helps the process of coping.

Not all people are 'talkers'. There are other ways of coping with the event, such as **WRITING IT DOWN**. It can often be very helpful to write it down in detail, both the facts and your thoughts and feelings. Perhaps you may show it to a trusted person later on.

**ACTIVITIES**, such as drawing, painting and games/sports are also very good way of coping with a shocking event. It is often a distraction to not constantly have to think about the situation, and that is a good thing. But try to find out what exactly happened, instead of letting your imagination run away with you.

**READ** about it. Reading books that describe loss and mourning may also be very supportive. You can ask the Public Library or Assistance Institutes for an extensive list with suggestions for books for young people dealing with the theme of 'mourning'.

**KEEP ON** doing **NICE** things. It is not good to be occupied with your grief all the time. It is important to divert your attention once in a while as a way of balancing the thought given to the event (and what this means to you for the rest of your life) and to nice things which you may continue to do. Even though it may take some effort to be interested in other things, such as sports or going to the pictures or to the disco, you will see that some distraction will do you good.



# When should you ask for help?

Like healing, coping with the event will take time, and this won't happen from one day to the next. Allow yourself some time. Tell your story in class, to friends, at home .... so that you can cope with the loss and deprivation, the farewell.

If you can no longer bear the pain and the feelings or the physical burden, if you have the feeling that you have reached a deadlock, that you still have so many questions and that this has already been going on for months, in that case you may need extra (professional) help. There may be someone at school: a confidant, the student counsellor, tutor, mentor or form teacher or the school doctor. Or outside school: your family doctor or a social worker for individual help.

Professional institutes often arrange discussion groups with peers that are in the same position of trying to cope with loss.

It may happen that medication is considered as a temporary aid to get through a difficult period. **DO NOT START EXPERIMENTING** on your own, but look for support from the list of the addresses below:

## Addresses for assistance and advice

- |  |
|--|
| ▪ Your family doctor   |
| ▪ GGD Gooi en Vechtstreek, team Jeugd en Gezin<br><a href="mailto:jeugd@ggdgv.nl">jeugd@ggdgv.nl</a>   (035) 692 63 50   |
| ▪ GGz Centraal<br><a href="http://www.ggzcentraal.nl">www.ggzcentraal.nl</a>   036 521 04 00   |
| ▪ Slachtofferhulp Nederland<br><a href="http://www.slachtofferhulp.nl">www.slachtofferhulp.nl</a>   (0900) 0101  |
| ▪ Versa Welzijn<br><a href="mailto:info@versawelzijn.nl">info@versawelzijn.nl</a> / <a href="http://www.versawelzijn.nl">www.versawelzijn.nl</a>   (035) 623 11 00 |



## More information

For more information, please contact team Jeugd en Gezin by sending an email to [jeugd@ggdgv.nl](mailto:jeugd@ggdgv.nl).

### Contact

 [www.ggdgv.nl/jeugd](http://www.ggdgv.nl/jeugd) |  (035) 692 63 50 |  [jeugd@ggdgv.nl](mailto:jeugd@ggdgv.nl)

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