

Common and Severe Reactions to Stress and Trauma in Adults

While no one reacts to stress and trauma in the same way, research indicates the following behaviors are considered common reactions:

- Increase or decrease in activity level
- Difficulties sleeping or eating
- Disconnection and numbing
- Confusion, lack of attention, and difficulty making decisions
- Somatic reactions (headaches, stomachaches)
- An increase in depressive or anxiety-related behaviors
- Irritability, anger, and frustration
- Decreased involvement in social activities
- Diminished engagement in self-care activities
- Increase in substance use

Severe reactions to trauma are rare and not always indicative of a mental illness. If symptoms don't go away or begin to interfere with your day-to-day life, they should be brought to the attention of a licensed medical or mental health professional. Severe reactions could include:

- Sense of helplessness
- Chronic exhaustion
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Changes in memory and perception
- Reliance on substances
- Prolonged depression accompanied by hopelessness
- Suicidal ideation or attempts
- Preoccupation or compulsive reexperiencing of traumatic event
- Disruption in your perceptions of safety and trust

Note. Adapted from: School crisis prevention and intervention: The PREPaRE model (3rd ed.)