

LIVING IN TRAUMATIC TIMES!

After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment...Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Trauma has been identified as a psychologically upsetting or highly intense event of low frequency that results in negative emotional reactions that have lasting effects
- ❖ It is extreme stress that overwhelms a person's coping ability so that they cannot integrate and adapt to the emotional experience
- ❖ Trauma is defined by the subjective experience of the viewer; one person may feel overwhelmed and terrified while others may be able to cope with it
- ❖ Traumas can include accidents, crimes, disasters, violent events, war, rape, abuse, imprisonment, deprivation, robberies, terrorism, harassment, abandonment, etc.
- ❖ Traumas caused by events such as shootings or explosions are unexpected, shocking and overwhelming to a person's emotional system
- ❖ Traumatic events are most powerful when they are unexpected, are especially cruel, happen repeatedly, and when people are unprepared and feel powerless
- ❖ After a trauma, people are often disoriented, feel shocked, and are unable to think
- ❖ Common reactions to trauma include:
 - ❖ Strong and intense feelings including anxiety, grief, vulnerability, and sadness
 - ❖ Behavior changes including disrupted eating and sleeping patterns
 - ❖ Physical changes such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, crying, weight gain or loss, headaches, chest pains, and vomiting
 - ❖ Cognitive changes including vivid and repetitive memories of the event, flashbacks, indecisiveness, and difficulty concentrating
 - ❖ Heightened sensitivity to loud noises, smells, and other environmental stimuli
 - ❖ Disruptions in relationships including more conflict, withdrawal, and isolation
 - ❖ Hypervigilance, panic attacks, and insomnia
- ❖ Survivors of repetitive trauma often have drug or alcohol abuse, personality disorders, depression, anxiety including PTSD, eating disorders, and dissociative disorders
- ❖ Triggers are defined as trauma reminders that can cause a person to mentally and physically re-experience the trauma
- ❖ Suicidality especially in combat veterans often occurs when the trauma symptoms do not diminish and the person may feel they are permanently damaged
- ❖ Primary treatments for trauma include Cognitive Behavior Therapy , EMDR, Somatic Experiencing, Biofeedback, Family Systems Therapy, Group Therapy and medication

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Seek professional help if you feel numb, continue to experience intense feelings or physical sensations, experience relationship conflict, are hypervigilant and get startled easily, have eating or sleeping problems, and feel overwhelming fear or sadness
- ❖ Recognize that you have been through an intense and overwhelming emotional experience and that you will have reactions to it; do not feel guilty
- ❖ Exercise and engage in other physical activities to focus on your body's reactions
- ❖ Practice mindfulness, relaxation breathing, yoga, meditation, etc.
- ❖ Be with friends and family, participate in social activities, and do not isolate
- ❖ Join a support group, volunteer, and participate in activities to feel empowered
- ❖ Eat and sleep well, do not avoid your usual activities, and do not use drugs and alcohol
- ❖ Give yourself permission and time to recover

WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com

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