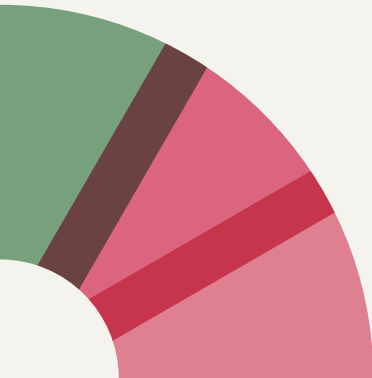

Rape Crisis Scotland

Information for survivors of sexual violence **Trauma**



Trauma

What is trauma?

- » Trauma is an experience, such as sexual violence, which overwhelms you and involves a threat to your life or your safety
- » In everyday life, any of us can have an experience that is overwhelming, frightening, and beyond our control. We could find ourselves in a car crash, the victim of an assault, or see an accident. Most people, in time, get over experiences like this without needing help. But for some people, traumatic experiences set off a reaction that can last for many months or years. This is called post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD for short
- » Trauma is a mix of upsetting emotions, frightening memories and feeling vulnerable and in danger (even if the danger has passed)
- » Sexual violence often causes trauma
- » The effects of trauma can last for a long time; adults may still experience the effects from something that happened in childhood
- » The effects of trauma can fade away completely. But sometimes memories are triggered by a smell, sound, or an anniversary that reminds you of the traumatic experience

How does trauma affect survivors of sexual violence?

- » Trauma can affect survivors in many different ways. These are all a natural response to what happened
- » Trauma can affect people emotionally. Common symptoms are:
 - Shock, denial, disbelief
 - Anger, irritability, mood swings
 - Guilt, shame, self-blame
 - Feeling sad or hopeless
 - Confusion, difficulty concentrating
 - Anxiety and fear
 - Withdrawing from others
 - Feeling disconnected or numb
 - Avoiding people or places you associate with the trauma
- » Trauma can affect people physically. Common symptoms are:
 - Not being able to sleep and/or nightmares
 - Being startled easily
 - Racing heartbeat
 - Aches and pains

- › Fatigue
 - › Difficulty concentrating
 - › Edginess and agitation
 - › Muscle tension
 - › Flashbacks (reliving the experience)
 - › Intrusive thoughts or images
- » There are many things you can do to help yourself but you may find support helpful to recover from trauma if you are:
- › Having trouble functioning at home or work
 - › Suffering from severe fear, anxiety, or depression
 - › Unable to form close, satisfying relationships
 - › Experiencing terrifying memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
 - › Avoiding more and more things which remind you of the trauma
 - › Emotionally numb and disconnected from others
 - › Using alcohol or drugs to feel better
 - › Self-harming to feel better

It helps to remember that you can recover from trauma. Many survivors of sexual violence heal from their experience. It is not possible to say how long it takes to heal from sexual violence as each person is different, but gradually, with support, many survivors find that the bad days become further apart.

What you can do: self-care tips for survivors

There are things you can do to help you manage the difficult feelings and reactions:

- » Avoid isolating yourself. It is natural to want to cut off but this can make things worse. Try to connect with people you trust and enjoy being with. Think about getting support from a service like rape crisis where you are safe to speak without fear of being judged or disbelieved. Support can be individual or in a group if you would like to meet other survivors with similar experiences
- » Keep yourself 'grounded'. It can help if you stick to a daily routine, with regular times for getting up, going to bed, eating and relaxing. Do things that make you feel better and keep your mind occupied (such as reading, sport, doing a class). This may help to distract you from focusing too much on the traumatic experience
- » Look after yourself physically. Try to get plenty of sleep. Have a routine. Exercise every day as this also helps you feel better and to sleep better. Eat a well-balanced diet. Eating little and often may help you to avoid over- or under-eating. Reduce or avoid using alcohol and drugs. They may help you feel better in the short-term but can lead to long-term problems

- » Be kind to yourself. Many survivors judge themselves for what happened or for how they are affected. For example, 'If only I hadn't done that' or 'Why am I not over it by now?' Remember your needs are important and how you speak to yourself can affect your recovery

Remember: you are important. Your feelings matter. You do not have to cope on your own.

Help and information

There are many people who want to help. You can phone/email the RCS Helpline for support and information. We can tell you about services in your area. You do not need to give your name. RCS Helpline (6pm to midnight every day) on 08088 01 03 02 or email anytime on support@rapecrisisScotland.org.uk

If you are feeling overwhelmed and you think this is having a serious effect on your health, speak to your GP or another professional. They may be able to refer you for talking or other therapies which can help you manage better.

The information in this leaflet draws on various sources including those below. **You can find more information online at:**

- » www.rapecrisisScotland.org.uk
- » Information after rape and sexual assault:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/13141931/0
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk
- » www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Anger.asp
- » www.mind.org.uk
- » www.getselfhelp.co.uk

App: eCBT Trauma

A useful book is: *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Laura Davis, 1990. Published by: HarperCollins in paperback.

Local rape crisis centres

Aberdeen

Helpline: 01224 620 772
Email: info@rasane.org.uk
www.rasane.org.uk

Argyll & Bute

Helpline (women): 0800 121 46 85
Helpline (men): 0800 032 0399
Email: info@ab-rc.org.uk
Email (support): support@ab-rc.org.uk
www.ab-rc.org.uk
or visit www.tessaproject.co.uk

Central Scotland

Helpline (women): 01786 471771
Helpline (men): 07733 964478
Email: csrcc@ic24.net
www.rapecrisiscentralscotland.co.uk

Dumfries and Galloway

Helpline: 01387 253 113 (Dumfries)
Helpline: 01776 889 331 (Stranraer)
Email: swrcandsac@btconnect.com
www.rape-crisis.co.uk

Dundee

Helpline: 01382 201 291
Email: wrasac@btconnect.com
Email (support): support@wrasacdundee.org
www.wrasacdundee.org

East Ayrshire

Helpline: 01563 541 769
Email: rrcc1@btconnect.com

Edinburgh

Helpline: 0131 556 9437
Email: info@ewrasac.org.uk
Email (support): support@ewrasac.org.uk
www.ewrasac.org.uk

Fife

Office: 01592 642 336
Email: info@frasac.org.uk
www.frasac.org.uk

Glasgow

Helpline: 08088 00 00 14
Email: info@rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk
www.rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk

Lanarkshire

Helpline: 01698 527 003
Email: info@lanrcc.org.uk
www.lanrcc.org.uk

Perth & Kinross

Helpline: 01738 630 965
Email: info@rasakpk.org.uk
Email (support): rasakpk@gmail.com
www.rasakpk.org.uk

Scottish Borders

Office: 01896 661070
Email: info@sbrcc.org.uk
Email (support): support@sbrcc.org.uk
www.scottishbordersrapecrisis.org.uk

Western Isles

Helpline & Office: 01851 709 965
Email: info@wircc.org.uk
www.wircc.org.uk

Information for survivors of sexual violence in this series:

- Anger
- Coping after sexual violence
- Dissociation
- Flashbacks
- Healing from sexual violence
- Nightmares and sleeping problems
- Panic attacks
- Relationships
- Self-harm
- Sexual health
- Suicidal thoughts/feelings
- Trauma



Helpline: **08088 01 03 02**

Email: **support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

For information on your local rape crisis centre visit our website:

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Published: Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 2013

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