

Common Reactions following an Assault

There is no single way to respond following a sexual assault. Each person who survives an assault will react in his or her own way. You may feel and appear numb and dazed; you may be calm and controlled; or you may react by expressing intense emotions. All of these reactions are normal. Your reaction will also change over time. Your response immediately following the assault will be different than your experience a few weeks or months later.

Below is a list of some common reactions experienced by survivors following an assault:

- Emotional shock: numbness, inability to feel or express emotion
- Shame: feeling dirty or defective, wanting to shower frequently
- Guilt: thinking it is your fault or that you did something to make it happen
- Depression: hopelessness, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, eating and concentrating on school or work
- Disorientation: difficulty keeping track of things and schedules
- Intrusive thoughts or flashbacks: experiencing unwanted memories of the assault as if you are reliving it, nightmares
- Fear: recurring thoughts of it happening again or difficulty returning to a normal routine due to fear of another assault
- Anxiety: panic attacks, obsessive worrying, difficulty breathing and feeling edgy or jittery
- Anger: thoughts of revenge, aggressive nightmares, anger at friends for not protecting or understanding
- Physical stress: stomach, head or back aches, muscle tightness, difficulty relaxing

Often following an assault, survivors feel that their lives will never be the same. Although this experience is life altering, survivors do go on to recover and reclaim their lives. Remember, you are not alone and you can get through this. We are here to help.