

You may also feel like you do not understand what is happening, and adults may not always explain everything. You might wonder why something like this happened when it is unfair. You might feel afraid about other people in your family becoming ill in the same way.

These feelings are normal after a traumatic situation but can be very scary, so remember to ask for help.

### **Things you can do to feel better and where to ask for help**

Remember to always talk to an adult you trust about how things are - let them know how you are feeling and ask any questions you have. If you don't want to talk, sometimes writing a letter or text can help. You can also use this leaflet to show others how you feel.

Having a sibling who has been through a trauma means that you will also develop a lot of strengths and skills. While this is a journey that is different for everyone, it's important to care for yourself and make sure you have time and space to do the things you enjoy. Do one nice thing every day, like watching a movie, listening to music, dancing, gymming, or spending time with family and pets.

### **You may find the following technique helpful if you are feeling distressed:**

Stop what you are doing and find a quiet space. It is normal and ok to feel like this when you've been through trauma.

- 5 things I can see
- 4 things I can hear
- 3 things I can touch
- 2 things I can smell
- 1 thing I can taste, 1 deep breath.

**If you are still feeling overwhelmed please talk to an adult you trust, or use the following:**

### **Emergency contacts**

Samaritans: Call 116 123

ChildLine: Call 08001111

NHS 24: Call 111 for urgent help; or 999 if someone is in danger or you are not safe.

### **Useful links and resources**

[www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/find-help/i-need-urgent-help/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/find-help/i-need-urgent-help/)

[www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/](http://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/)

[www.mymentalhealth.barnardos.org.uk/advice](http://www.mymentalhealth.barnardos.org.uk/advice)

[www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/](http://www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/)



## **Understanding and managing trauma**

Information for older siblings

## **Understanding and managing trauma. Information for siblings**

This leaflet can help you understand the thoughts and feelings you may have if your brother or sister has been involved in a traumatic situation. A traumatic situation (or trauma) is a very scary or dangerous event.

Seeing or hearing about a trauma can have a big impact on one's life, even if it hasn't directly happened to you.

### **How might I be feeling?**

It is normal to have strong emotions about what happened, and these might change often. You may be feeling:

- sad
- shocked
- left out
- lonely
- worried about your sibling
- anxious
- selfish
- confused
- frustrated/angry
- helpless.

When you worry, you may notice your heart racing, sweating or feeling dizzy. You may have trouble sleeping or have nightmares. You might also get headaches or a sore stomach.

It can also be common to find it hard to concentrate on other things, and you might find it harder to enjoy the things you usually enjoyed. This can mean that school can be a bit harder, and you might feel like you want your own space more and withdraw from family and friends. During these times it is important to reach out for support. You don't have to go through all of this by yourself.

You might go through all of these feelings, or you might feel numb and unsure of what you're feeling.

These are all normal, and there is no right way to feel. While your sibling is the one who is unwell or has experienced a traumatic incident, this also affects you so you are allowed your own thoughts and feelings about what happened. Many of these feelings are normal and lessen with time. If they last more than a month be sure to speak to a responsible adult.

### **Why am I feeling this way?**

There can be many changes when your sibling has been through a traumatic situation.

Parents may have to spend a long time in the hospital, and you may feel alone and find it hard to understand what is happening. You may be missing your parents, your sibling, or both.

You may have had to move in with someone else (e.g., a grandparent) and may be missing some of your regular routines or having to miss school. Your usual family relationships and roles may have changed, which can be very hard to deal with. You might feel like you are supporting your family more, and it can be hard to see them in distress.

If your sibling has had an injury, they may need a lot of care. It can be difficult to accept that your sibling may be different after their injury. It is normal to feel worried, sad, guilty or angry about these changes. Your sibling may get lots of attention and you might feel jealous. This is ok. They're still your brother or sister, so it's also ok to have all the same feelings you had before – like getting irritated with each other and disagreeing.