

You may be worried about friends and family in Iran and don't know what to do. Pictures and news of the current situation in Iran are disturbing and can be triggering or bring flashbacks.

We share your concern for the situation and your worries for the people in Iran. If you yourself feel anxious or triggered by the situation and have trouble functioning, we offer this information on how to cope.

Stabilization techniques and grounding exercises are some tools to calm yourself.

It may be helpful to know a little bit about trauma and what type of mental and physical reactions that are common if you have experiencing trauma or extreme stressors, both for people experiencing trauma and for friends and relatives.

Information about how the brain works and why we as human beings react the way we do in traumatic events can be useful. This may provide the us with the knowledge and ability to deal with problems in alternative ways. Knowledge means that we understand what traumatic events may do to a person, what we may expect and is aware of the reactions we may have. **We believe that the more we are aware and knowledgeable about the problem and how it affects us and the lives of others, the more control we can have over own life and the better we can deal with and live with the reactions. In this way, information about trauma may empower both you and people close to you.**

'Trauma' means wound. In both medicine and psychology, it refers to major physical or mental injuries, including threats to life or physical integrity.

Some key things to know about trauma:

- The situation is overwhelming, inescapable and very frightening
- Threaten life and integrity
- Loss of control and beyond what we are prepared to deal with
- Most people will struggle with serious reactions such as intrusive memories, re-experiences, flashbacks and sleeping problems afterward
- Suffering can be recognized in thoughts, feelings, breathing, heart and body



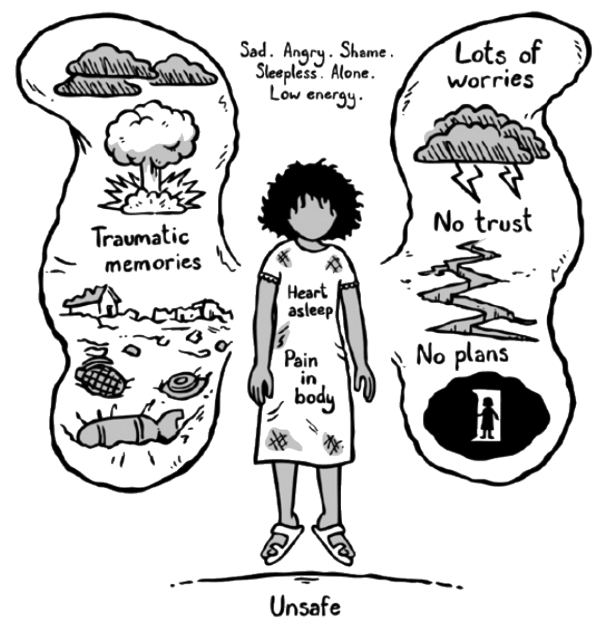
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 *Mental health*
AND HUMAN RIGHTS INFO



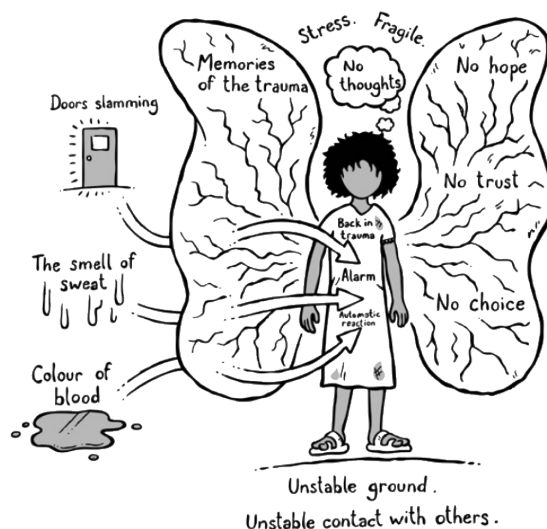
A **'traumatic event'** is one that has the capacity to cause mental or physical trauma. Faced by such an event, the immediate response of the body and the mind is to struggle for survival. Behaviourally this is expressed by 'fight, flight or freeze responses, submission or 'playing dead'.

A severe traumatic event often changes the way in which you understand the world around you. You may lose your sense of safety and feel vulnerable and helpless. If the event involves acts of violence and the intention to hurt, trust in other people may be lost and the survivor's relationships with others seriously disturbed. **Personal encounters with human or man-made violence are considered the most disturbing forms of trauma, likely to have the most lasting impact.**

Loss of safety, control and trust commonly leads to depression (deep sadness, loss of the will to live, etc.) or anxiety. It is important to emphasize that the reactions that survivors experience are "normal" reactions to an abnormal event. **You are not crazy!**

Some important things to know about acute trauma:

- When you are traumatized, your feelings are intense and chaotic
- Fear and shame may cause you to withdraw and refuse social contact
- Trauma might cause your confidence to collapse
- It is important to act but, at the same time, you decide when you are ready to make contact and open a conversation



Flashbacks are sudden, often strong, and uncontrollable re-experiences of a traumatic event or elements of that event. You may feel disconnected from your bodily sensations and feel numb or may be unable to recall traumatic memories. A state of heightened arousal is also quite usual. You may be on your guard all the time, startle easily, sleep poorly, be irritable, or find it difficult to remember and concentrate. A personal encounter with violence and death may also haunt you, who may painfully re-experience the event in dreams or daily life (also called *intrusion*). We call the reminders that cause intrusion 'triggers'.

Triggers, or trauma-reminders, are events, objects or situations that remind you of the painful experiences and memories. Such reminders may elicit trauma reactions over and over again. They can be extremely distressing and create such anxiety that people are afraid to go out, see people, hear certain sounds, or do many ordinary usual things.

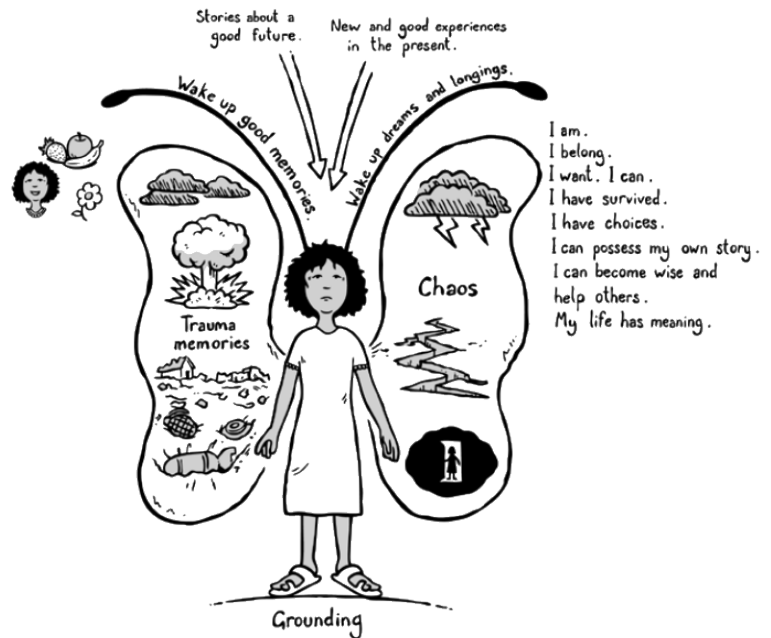
Some key points to know about triggers:

- Unexpected situations can suddenly trigger trauma reactions
- It is possible to prepare against these, by using the senses to feel more present

Calming yourself when being triggered:

In order to support yourself, it is useful to return **back to the here and now**. You may say things like this to yourself:

- “You are at home/a café/in a park (or where you are at the present moment) now”
- “You are safe here in this room”
- “You are here now and not where the traumatic event happened”
- “You are strong and courageous”
- “Remember to breathe”
- “Look around, try to be present here and now” (for example, you can fix your eyes on objects in the room and say things like “I see the white table over there? I see the green carpet? The yellow chair?”)



You may also practice [grounding exercises](#) and try to use them if/when being triggered.

We have now provided you with information about how trauma and traumatic events may affect the body and the mind. We hope that this information will be helpful in understanding your reactions better. We have also given some information about how to calm yourself when being triggered.

The grounding exercises that we have described explain how practicing grounding exercises regularly, either alone or together, may help the survivor to deal with traumatic memories, triggers, flashbacks and nightmares if they occur. **We, therefore, recommend that you have a look at the page with grounding exercises and try some of them. Maybe this can be helpful in handling the trauma reactions, making good decisions for oneself and others, and take some control back in life.**

Remember that, with time, you will feel better.