

*Sources of information*

# VIOLENCE

## AFTER THE EVENT

What to observe

What to do

Where to go

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Dr. Gisela Perren-Klingler

## **Violence: After the disastrous EVENT**

After a disaster, collective or individual, human beings always react in a similar way. He or she is shaken and the accident continues to pursue him/her. Many assumptions about life are questioned, some-times beliefs and relationships too. This is normal and shows the NORMAL reaction of a person, for whom the unthinkable has become reality

Specific reactions after a disastrous event or calamity are:

- ◆ one is over aroused and incapable of sleeping, hyper-active, fearful, (even if security is re-established), impatient and aggressive; children cling to persons of reference, are tearful or aggressive
- ◆ one gets repeatedly caught up by the traumatic event, even if one tries to avoid thinking about it, in day-time by the so called "flashbacks", at night by nightmares
- ◆ one tries to become insensitive for the sake of not reliving the shock of the disaster, but one also becomes insensitive to beautiful things, avoiding situations, places or persons, that could recall the disaster (up to phobias)

**All these phenomena show the affected person is going over the event and reacting in a normal way. The brain is doing its best to survive and inte-grate the occurrence**

## **After a disastrous event it is important TO CALM DOWN**

Normal daily routine, or as normal as possible, has  
To be established:

- ◆ work or useful pastimes during the day, sleep at night
- ◆ talk to other afflicted people, especially those who were in the immediate vicinity during the event. Work together on a run-down of the event, find a COMMON THREAD. Ask oneself what one has seen, heard or done
- ◆ allow emotional reactions as long as they do not disturb too much. To dominate the situation it is not necessary to let out all ones emotions; nor to keep them back entirely
- ◆ seek help from ones own group and search for solidarity at a local, national, and international level
- ◆ children´s everyday life should be as normal as possible, including school, games and activities. Discuss the event with the children
- ◆ use mourning rituals of ones own culture if necessary establish special rituals for ones own family. Seek the help of local "pointers" clergymen, healers, family doctors etc.
- ◆ movement and activity are very useful and con-ciliate sleep at night: In the case of obstinate insomnia a light sleeping pill can be taken for a short time (few days)

**TO BE PATIENT WITH ONESELF AND OTHERS IS PURE GOLD!**

## **WHEN IT IS ADVISABLE TO SEEK HELP ?**

- ◆ if the reactions previously described are becoming so strong as to make ones life quite unbearable
- ◆ if the world becomes so chaotic that one cant bear it any longer
- ◆ if after four weeks, the reactions are as strong as on the first day
- ◆ if somatic illnesses are added to the described reactions;
- ◆ if one has had psychiatric or psychotherapeutic treatment before
- ◆ if one has already been suffering from an unresolved trauma
- ◆ when the family is also in need of help even if they were not immediately involved in the disaster
- ◆ when working colleagues need help too

Help at a psychotherapeutical-medical-psychological level will rarely require many hours. More important is to learn to live with the event and how to heal the wound with the passing of time. Life will never again be as before, but life goes on and holds a lot of good surprises in store for you.