

7. **Talk to others for support:** When you feel more ready, consider talking to a trusted friend or loved one to help you cope if uncomfortable feelings overwhelm you.



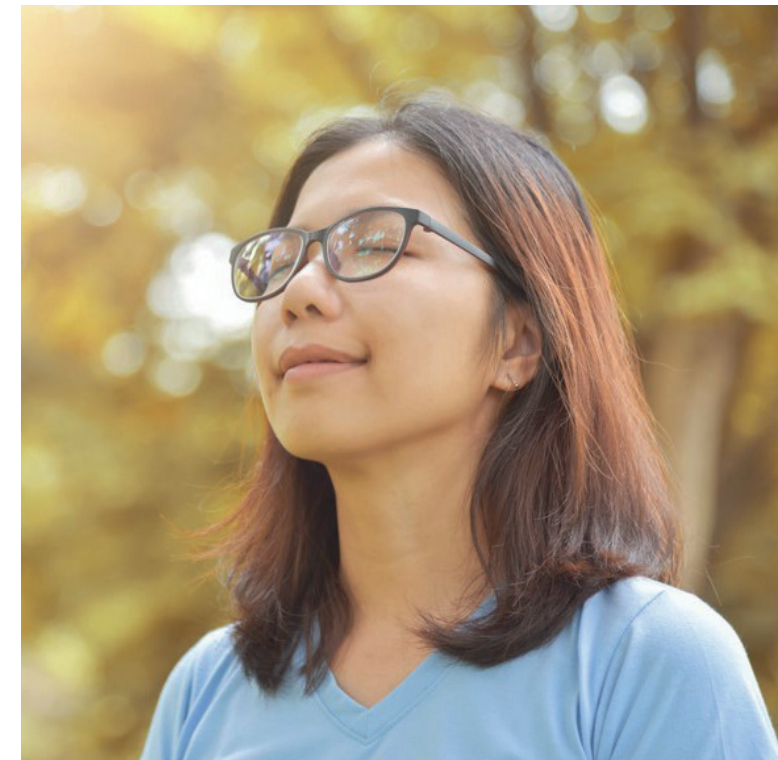
If you are currently seeing a KKH psychiatrist or medical doctor, they can refer you to the **Psychosocial Trauma Support Service (PTSS)** at KKH. PTSS is a team of clinical psychologists that specialises in providing psychological trauma assessment and interventions for children and women, to support them in coping with the after-effects of traumatic experiences.

■ **When and where can you seek professional support from?**

With consistent self-care and healthy social support, a majority of people find that their traumatic stress reactions get better with time. Professional support may be needed if traumatic stress reactions persist beyond **one month**, and continue to negatively impact on your day-to-day, work, or social functioning. There are evidence-based treatments available to help survivors recover from traumatic stress.

Seeking early treatment for traumatic stress can help you get back to enjoying the things and relationships that are important to you, in addition to improving your overall well-being. Consider speaking with your polyclinic doctor or general practitioner (GP) for a referral to a psychiatrist and/or psychologist in restructured hospitals. You may also wish to consider seeking out private psychiatrists or psychologists, who would not require a referral.

Psychological Trauma in Adults



Useful telephone number
Central Appointments 6294-4050

Psychological trauma, also known as traumatic stress, can occur following a threatening event. A threatening event can be any distressing, dangerous, or scary experience that often results in fear, horror, numbness or helplessness, overwhelming one's usual ability to cope. Personally experiencing, witnessing, and sometimes even just learning about a crisis or threatening event may lead to psychological trauma.

What are some common examples of traumatic events?

Some examples include experiencing or witnessing sexual abuse or assault, physical abuse or violence, death or sudden loss of a loved one, neglect or abandonment, emotional abuse, childhood abuse, a painful or frightening medical procedure, a traffic or other accident, or large-scale disasters (e.g., fire, terrorist attacks).

What does psychological trauma look like?

It is normal to experience some traumatic stress reactions after a traumatic event. These reactions may include:

- **Re-experiencing the event, even when safe.** Repeatedly talking or thinking about the traumatic event, or have thoughts about the event pop up at unexpected times.
- **Negative changes in mood or thoughts.** Feeling more fearful, worried, sad or irritable than usual. There may be a loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed, feelings of emotional numbness and detachment from others, or withdrawing from social interactions. There may also be feelings of mistrust and a sense that the world is dangerous.

- **Increased arousal and reactivity.** Feeling easily startled or on edge, or have changes to their appetite and sleep (e.g., including nightmares). There may also be complaints of physical ailments (e.g., stomach-aches, headaches), concentration difficulties (e.g., in meetings, during lessons), and increased irritability or aggressive reactions.
- **Avoiding reminders of the event.** Avoiding feeling, thinking, or remembering what happened, or external reminders like places, people, or things associated with the event.

Traumatic stress symptoms can impact people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, educational background or financial means. Such symptoms may also have a delayed onset and could surface months or years later after the traumatic event, sometimes in response to new life stages or new perspectives (e.g., a young adult having a deeper understanding of a traumatic event that occurred in childhood).

How may psychological trauma impact your quality of life?

These reactions may sometimes affect how you function at school or work, and may impact your relationships with your family members, friends, and partners. These reactions may also affect your daily living and how you feel about yourself, and they can feel challenging to manage.

Some examples in which your day-to-day, work, or social functioning may be negatively impacted can include:

- Changing how you interact with your loved ones (e.g., increased conflicts, withdrawing from them)

- Feeling afraid or too “down” to participate in what you used to enjoy (e.g., avoiding certain movies, hangout places)
- Increase in use of unhealthy coping strategies (e.g., drinking more alcohol, working more, engaging in risky sexual activity)
- Having thoughts and/or actions of hurting yourself or ending your life
- Having thoughts and/or actions of hurting other people
- Repeated observations or concerns expressed by loved ones that you may not be coping well
- Long-term trauma has also been found to be linked to physical health difficulties (e.g., problems in the digestive, respiratory, nervous systems)

What are some things you can try to feel better?

1. **Give yourself time:** Everyone has their own unique response to a traumatic event, and the pace of recovery can vary. Recovery is an ongoing process that involves engaging in the following strategies on a regular basis. It happens little by little. Allow yourself to take things one day at a time as you recover.
2. **Take care of your everyday needs, and maintain routines:** Get enough rest or sleep, eat a healthy diet, and get regular physical activity. Try and continue to engage in usual routines and activities as much as possible. Even if your work or school routine is disrupted, you can structure your day with consistent times for sleep, meals, and activities (e.g., spending time with friends and loved ones, engaging in relaxing activities).

3. **Take time to engage in activities that calm your body:** Do things that you enjoy and can help to calm your body. Examples may include: reading, journaling, listening to music, cooking, drawing, meditation/prayer, deep breathing, or spending time in nature.
4. **Notice and acknowledge your emotions:** It is natural to feel worried, upset, or overwhelmed after a traumatic event. It can be helpful to notice these uncomfortable feelings, doing your best not to assign judgment on yourself, or feeling guilty about experiencing these feelings. One possible way to do this is to gently acknowledge and validate your emotions (e.g., telling yourself “I am feeling sad; it is okay that I feel sad, it’s normal to feel this way after the event”).
5. **Avoid alcohol and drugs:** While you might feel the urge to use alcohol or drugs to cope with uncomfortable feelings, relying on substances provides only temporary relief, may worsen traumatic stress symptoms (e.g. increased avoidance or emotional numbness), or lead to more problems in the long run (e.g., relationship problems). If you are struggling with the use of alcohol or drugs, do seek help (e.g., National Addictions Management System) to manage reliance on these substances.
6. **Maintain some social connection:** Spending time with loved ones and friends you trust and find supportive can give you a sense of comfort and connection. Engaging in simple routines together with them (e.g., watch movies, have meals together) can also help improve your mood and reduce arousal symptoms. You can choose to tell them that you do not wish to talk about what happened if you do not want to.