

THE UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

# TRAUMA GUIDE



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**PREPARED BY**

OFFICE OF STUDENT CARE AND ADVOCACY



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# ABOUT TRAUMA

## **Trauma**

Noun 1. A deeply distressing or disturbing experience; any incident that causes physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological harm.

## **What are normal reactions to trauma?**

People respond in many different ways to trauma. There may be an initial period of shock, and it may take some time for the weight of the event to be fully experienced. Often people experience:

- Nightmares
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Difficulty focusing
- Avoidance of triggers of the event
- Mood and/or appetite changes
- Flashbacks of the event
- Anger
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, stomachaches and fatigue
- Worsening of existing medical conditions

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# WHAT ARE WAYS TO MANAGE THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA?



**Increase feelings of safety and control** by changing your routine, taking a self defense class, requesting trusted friends to spend time with you, sharing meals and/or walking with you to classes.

**Increase self-care behaviors** such as exercise, set aside time for soothing music, meditation, seek out new hobbies and adequately fuel your body with a variety of foods.

**Consistently prioritize sleep** and rest into your schedule.

**Seek Social Support** by telling trusted friends and family what happened, if you choose. It is always your choice to tell your story. Keep in mind that well-intentioned loved ones may not know how to respond or they may have a difficult time talking about what has happened. Don't take their response personally or let it deter you from continuing to seek support and finding what you need.

**Seek Professional Support** by speaking with a trained, confidential University advocate to explore options and feelings by calling (813) 257-3900. You can also speak with a trained, confidential University counselor to process thoughts and emotions by calling (813) 253-6250.

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# COMMON CONCERNS AFTER TRAUMA

## EATING ISSUES

If you're having trouble eating, try to tolerate small bites of foods you like. Try to stay as hydrated as possible (water, Gatorade). Once you start to feel hungry again, return slowly to normal eating habits.

Listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues. Try to pay attention to what you're eating, and enjoy how the food smells and tastes. Take time between completing one bite and taking the next one.

## SHOCK OR FEELING DISCONNECTED

These feelings may have started during the trauma as a survival mechanism and may linger on into daily life, or when you think about the trauma. It still may not feel real, or it may feel like you are watching yourself in a movie. This experience is normal and may come and go in waves. Grounding and mindfulness exercises can help you to feel connected within yourself. Having moments where you are aware of your body can help reduce this feeling. Take deep breaths, pay attention to how it feels to move and to stay still, and engage with your senses. Notice what you see, smell, hear, taste and touch. These types of mindful moments will assist in decreasing the feeling of being disconnected.

## SOCIAL UNCERTAINTY

It is always your choice whom to talk to about what happened. You don't have to tell anyone at all, and certainly not until you are ready. Social support can be helpful in your healing journey, but keep in mind that not everyone is able to respond in a supportive way. They may have their own trauma that keeps them from being present for you. It may be too hard to imagine you, as someone they care about, going through a traumatic event, and/or there could be other factors of which you're not aware. Often, we may have well-intentioned loved ones who don't know what to say, so they may inadvertently say something that is hurtful or blaming. Don't let this discourage you, keep looking for meaningful connections and social support in your life.

## SLEEPING ISSUES

Sometimes falling asleep can be difficult. During the day, it can be easy to stay busy and think about other things, but when lying down to sleep there may be a flood of thoughts that were held back by the busyness of the day. Try writing down the thoughts that continue to come up during the day. It may be helpful to identify action steps to address these thoughts and acknowledge the things you do not have control over. Depending on the depth and difficulty of these thoughts, you may want to seek professional support from a counselor or advocate to assist in processing and coping with these thoughts and concerns. It may be helpful to read (nothing suspenseful), do deep breathing exercises, listen to soothing music, do yoga stretches, and/or meditate as a bedtime routine.

## DIFFICULTY WITH MOTIVATION

As you adjust and the reality of the trauma sets in, there may be a decrease in motivation. Once you build momentum it gets easier, but the first step is often the most difficult. It helps to find something enjoyable to assist in motivation. For example, a friend could agree to meet you to walk to class together, or you and the friend could take a brief walk prior to class. Having a friend, whether they know what happened or not, can assist with feeling connected to others which can assist with getting back into a healthy routine. It can also be helpful to build enjoyable things into the structure of your day, especially on days when you have something for which it is difficult to be motivated. For example, planning an outing with a friend after a big test, finding a small way to treat yourself or doing something special before or after an appointment that you anticipate being challenging.

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# HOW CAN TRAUMA IMPACT RELATIONSHIPS?

**Every person will have a unique response to dealing with their trauma. This list below contains some common responses to trauma but is not comprehensive.**

After enduring a traumatic experience, there may be an assumption of danger, betrayal or potential harm within new or old relationships.

Trauma can put emotions in a state of fluctuation, which can lead to conflicting feelings. There may be a desire to be close and connected to people but also feel the need to push others away for fear of being harmed or betrayed.

You may be experiencing extreme vulnerability and reluctance about what thoughts, statements and behaviors are safe. This could negatively affect your ability to trust within relationships.

Trauma can put your body into a state of "fight or flight" in order to survive the event. Sometimes this state can linger on leading you to feel on edge and on high alert. You may jump or startle easily, and you may prefer being around smaller groups of trusted people.

Particularly in cases of sexual trauma, physical intimacy with a partner may be extremely difficult, or in some cases, something you're not comfortable with at all after an event.

Have patience with yourself, and know that you deserve and are able to have healthy, safe and happy relationships with others.





# HOW TO SEEK HELP IF YOU HAVE THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

SEEK ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY:

TIME	WHO TO CALL	NUMBER
<b>8:30 A.M. - 5 P.M.</b> MONDAY-FRIDAY	COUNSELING CENTER	(813) 253-6250
<b>AFTER HOURS AND WEEKENDS</b>	CAMPUS SAFETY	(813) 257-7777

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# CAMPUS RESOURCES

## **Victim Advocacy** (813) 257-3900

[ut.edu/victimadvocacy](http://ut.edu/victimadvocacy)

-Provides a number of services for students who have been the victim of a violent crime.

## **Spartan Support Program** (813) 257-3901

[ut.edu/spartansupportprogram](http://ut.edu/spartansupportprogram)

-Provides support to students and connection to resources to address the student's unique needs.

## **Dickey Health and Wellness Center** (813) 253-6250

[ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/dickey-health-and-wellness-center](http://ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/dickey-health-and-wellness-center)

-Provides confidential medical services and mental health counseling.

## **Campus Safety** (813) 257-7777

[ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/campus-safety](http://ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/campus-safety)

-Provides a safe and secure environment for the campus.

## **LASER Team** (813) 257-4515

[ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/safety-escort-service](http://ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/safety-escort-service)

-Provides transportation assistance whether due to injury, disability, adverse weather (not including severe storms with lightning) or for general safety.

## **International Programs Office** (813) 258-7433

[ut.edu/international-programs/international-student-and-scholar-services](http://ut.edu/international-programs/international-student-and-scholar-services)

-Provides support for documentation, regulations, cultural adjustments, academic issues and other concerns for international students.

## **Residence Life** (813) 253-6239

[ut.edu/campus-life/residence-life](http://ut.edu/campus-life/residence-life)

-Provides inclusive residential community and dynamic learning experiences that promote student development and academic success.

## **Title IX**

[ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/human-resources/title-ix/](http://ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/human-resources/title-ix/)

-Provides grievance procedures and supportive measure options in compliance with federal law prohibiting discrimination based on sex.



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# OFF-CAMPUS RESOURCES

**Crisis Center of Tampa Bay** 211 or (813) 264-9961

[crisiscenter.com](http://crisiscenter.com)

- Provides support for sexual assault survivors, domestic violence survivors, general trauma or distress.
- Provides forensic exams up to 5 days after a sexual assault.

**The Spring of Tampa Bay** (813) 247-7233

[thespring.org](http://thespring.org)

- Provides support for domestic violence survivors.

**RAINN National Hotline** (800) 656-4673

[rainn.org](http://rainn.org)

- Provides information about sexual assault and sexual abuse.

**Bay Area Legal Services** (800) 625-2257

[bals.org](http://bals.org)

- Provides civil legal services to low income Tampa Bay residents.

**Florida Council Against Sexual Violence** (850) 297-2000

[fcasv.org](http://fcasv.org)

- Provides resources and legal services to survivors of sexual assault in the state of Florida.

**FL Department of Children and Families**

Abuse Hotline (800) 962-2873

[myflfamilies.com](http://myflfamilies.com)

- Provides resources to Florida families.
- Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect that someone under 18 years old is abused, abandoned, neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare is a mandated reporter *[FL statute 39.201 (1)(a)]*.

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## FURTHER READINGS AND RESOURCES

Scan the QR Code Below:



[tinyurl.com/UTTraumaResources](https://tinyurl.com/UTTraumaResources)