# Common Reactions

While each person responds differently, below are some common reactions after sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual abuse or exploitation.

## Physical
- Nausea/vomiting
- Tremors/shakiness
- Loss of coordination
- Sleep disturbances
- Easily startled/jumpy
- Chills
- Diarrhea
- Chest pains
- Rapid heart rate
- Stomach pain
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Appetite changes
- Crying
- Tension
- Changes in sexual libido

## Emotional
- Anxiety/worry
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Guilt/shame
- Sadness/depression
- Feeling lost/abandoned
- Fear/panic
- Anger/outrage/fury
- Feeling helpless/powerless
- Numbness
- Shock
- Irritability
- Self blame
- Grief
- Negative body image
- Sudden mood changes
- Disgust

## Cognitive
- Delayed processing
- Difficulty making decisions
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Difficulty with calculations
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory problems
- Decreased attention span
- Racing thoughts
- Self-consciousness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Homicidal thoughts
- Trying not to think about it
- Thinking about it constantly

## Spiritual
- Change in sense of connection with university or community
- Loss of sense of safety
- Loss of sense of justice
- Change in worldview
- Doubts about beliefs
- Loss of trust in others
- Changes in spiritual or religious practices
- Sense of relating to other survivors
- Awareness of violence, privilege, and oppression
- Sense of shame

## Behavioral
- Withdrawal/isolation
- Avoiding specific situations, people, or places
- Suspiciousness
- Increased nicotine use
- Increased alcohol/drug use
- Unusual behavior
- Overly vigilant in the environment
- Excessive humor
- Emotional outbursts
- Missing classes
- Changes in appearance
- Changes in usual activities
- Act like nothing has changed
- Changes in sexual behavior
- Self-injury

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**24-Hour Crisis Line:** (517) 372-6666  
**Office:** (517) 355-3551  
**Crisis Chat 10am-10pm:** centerforsurvivors.msu.edu  

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Coping with Common Reactions

Everyone reacts to trauma differently, which includes coping with and healing from the trauma. It’s important to know healing is possible. If you are struggling, it may help to try some of the coping strategies below. It can also help to reach out to a therapist in order to process your reactions and identify additional effective coping strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relaxation and Grounding</th>
<th>Emotional Release and Regulation</th>
<th>Thought Challenging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to a friend</td>
<td>Remind yourself that emotions are okay</td>
<td>Ask yourself: Is this a fact or a thought?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a show</td>
<td>Yell or scream</td>
<td>Learn more about thinking patterns and habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do a puzzle</td>
<td>Punch a pillow</td>
<td>Examine pros and cons of situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice deep breathing</td>
<td>Cry</td>
<td>Try to come up with information to challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download a mindfulness app or learn about</td>
<td>Watch something funny</td>
<td>negative thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nature</td>
<td>Tell someone how you feel</td>
<td>Think about what you would tell a loved one if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat mindfully</td>
<td>Identify feelings</td>
<td>they were having negative thoughts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage your five senses</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Identify your triggers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind yourself where you are in the</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Notice what is happening in your world before</td>
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<tr>
<td>present moment</td>
<td>Draw a picture</td>
<td>you have negative thoughts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take a hot bath or shower</td>
<td>Rip up paper</td>
<td>Notice the feelings that go with the thought.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light a candle</td>
<td>Squeeze a stress ball</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observe without judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remind yourself it was not your fault</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spiritual Coping**

- Surround yourself with nature
- Practice acceptance
- Practice gratitude
- Use affirmations
- Pray or practice your religion
- Connect with others
- Volunteer for a good cause

**Coping through Movement**

- Clean or tidy your space
- Do yoga, tai chi, or gentle stretching etc.
- Walk or run
- Dance
- Workout/exercise
- Throw or kick a ball
- Practice a sport
- Stretch