



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

CRISIS AND TRAUMA

Reactions to Crisis

REACTIONS TO CRISIS

When big things happen in our lives that are beyond our control, we respond to this uncertainty and change in a variety of ways. Both our bodies and our minds can be overwhelmed by what is happening due to the areas of our brains that are activated by these difficult events. When we decide that it is time to do the healing work, we can help to reduce this brain response. Healing work can include:



- Engaging in cultural and spiritual practices
- Talking with Elders for guidance
- Practising healing rituals and ceremonies
- Connecting with nature
- Seeking out counselling

Similarly, when big things happen to us that are unexplainable and beyond our control, our brains step in to protect our bodies. You may have some of the following experiences:

- Feeling foggy or like nothing is real
- Having a hard time focusing or concentrating
- Feeling numb or exhausted
- Feeling okay one minute then horrible the next minute
- Feeling like you can't trust anything or anyone
- Having a hard time getting to sleep or staying asleep
- Eating more than normal or eating mindlessly
- Having a hard time remembering to eat



With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a huge shift in how people are living their lives. It takes time to adjust to a new reality that includes physical distancing, not being able to travel, not being able to see family and friends in person, not being able to participate in cultural and community ceremonies and events, and many other restrictions.

Remember to ask for help when you need it. If daily routines are feeling overwhelming, we can turn to our family and friends, as well as trusted people in our communities and ask for guidance. We can also seek professional help from outside sources.

TRAUMA

There are many different kinds of incidents that can cause trauma. For First Nations people, the impact of colonialism has been traumatizing for individuals, families, communities and Nations. When we experience trauma or if something reminds us of our past trauma, we may experience:



- Difficulty concentrating
- Having a hard time staying focused
- Restlessness, irritability or anger
- Hypervigilance - being on “high alert” all of the time
- Body aches and pains
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair
- Difficulty talking about traumatic feelings and experiences
- Difficulty with relationships and intimacy

Trauma is serious but we can heal. Therapy can include our cultural and spiritual practices. There are other strategies and tools that can help too.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU MOVE FORWARD

Acknowledge that trauma has occurred. Know that what you are thinking and feeling is because of trauma. You can explore what self-care looks and feels like for you. Try different strategies to support healing from trauma. Self-care practices can include:

- Cultural practices and ceremony, including personal cleansing, taking a walk with the intention to heal, or praying
- Strong social connections with family and friends
- Healthy routines and healthy eating habits
- Exercise
- Counselling

