



Johnson City / Washington County FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

Three Steps for Emotional Safety Planning

IDENTIFY EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs are the bodily sensations or behavioral reactions to a trigger. It is important to be able to identify your trigger(s) and early warning sign(s), so you can manage your reactions and behaviors.

Agitation	Crying
Sweating	Pacing
Clenching of teeth	Heart pounding
Wringing of hands	Eating more/less
Sensation of tightness in chest	Shortness of breath
Bouncing of legs	Raise your voice
Restlessness	Breathing hard
Shaking	Clenching fists
Swearing	Giggling

IDENTIFY COPING STRATEGIES

These coping strategies should be calming or grounding techniques that help you manage and minimize stress.

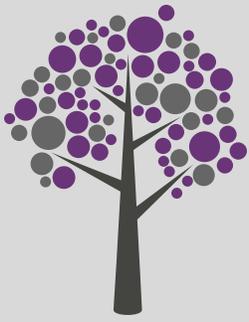
Sing	Draw
Exercise	Journal
Pray or meditate	Call someone
Take a hot/cold shower	See a therapist
Talk to someone who will listen	Go to support group(s)
Cold/warm washcloth on face	Call domestic violence hotline
Practice relaxation exercises	Take time for yourself daily
Treat yourself with respect	Listen to music
Maintain a balanced diet	Go for a walk
Lay down or rest	Read a book
Breathe deeply	Hum
Pace	Cry

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL TRIGGERS

A trigger is an event or feeling that reminds you of difficult things that have happened in the past. A trigger may cause you to react with feelings of fear, panic, or agitation.

POTENTIAL TRIGGERS MAY INCLUDE:

- Having your space invaded
- Being teased or taunted
- Not being listened to
- Lack of privacy
- Feeling pressured
- Feeling lonely
- Darkness
- Certain scents
- People yelling
- Arguments
- Feeling isolated
- Being touched
- Loud noises
- Being stared at
- Contact with family
- Particular times of day/night
- Particular times of year



WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Individual trauma results from an event, or series of events, experienced by an individual, which is physically or emotionally harmful, life threatening, or has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Trauma can happen to anyone.

It is an individual's experience of the event
—*not necessarily the event itself*—
that is traumatizing.

Traumatic responses are *NORMAL* responses to *ABNORMAL* situations.

be gentle with yourself
YOU'RE DOING THE BEST YOU CAN

NORMAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

There are several automatic responses to trauma, and they cannot be planned, so there is no blame or shame in these responses. They are human adaptations used to deal with extraordinary circumstances.

Possible adaptations include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Changes in sleep | Feeling numb |
| Aches and pains | Startling easily |
| Minimizing the experience | Reliving the experience |
| Controlling everyday experiences | Not trusting others or yourself |
| Feelings of detachment | Trouble with decision-making |
| Feelings of self-blame | Trouble with concentration |
| Emotional swings | Fight, flight or freeze |
| Fear or anxiety | Anger or agitation |

TRAUMA AND MEMORY

Trauma impairs the process of converting memories from short-term to long-term memory. Many times, even long after an individual's experiences, they continue to perceive and respond to stress differently than someone who is not suffering the aftermaths of trauma.

To retain information, it may be helpful to:

- Write information down
- Ask for information in several formats (written, video, etc.)
- Repeat information back to people

To recall/remember the traumatic event, it helps to:

- Give yourself time
- Write the event down, leave it, come back, and write it down again a day or so later (repeating as often as necessary)