Dealing with unexpected life events is a powerful stressor that can have multiple effects on an individual. Although there is considerable difference in how people experience and manage their reaction, it is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience stress reactions. Sometimes the stress reactions occur immediately after the life event, but more commonly, the stress reactions will appear a few hours or a few days later. Following is a list of typical reactions to stressful events and situations.

### Physical Reactions
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Sleep disturbance
- Underactivity/overactivity
- Change in appetite
- Elevated blood pressure
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Thirst

### Cognitive Reactions
- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Intrusive images
- Difficulty making decisions
- Memory disturbance
- Preoccupation with the event
- Lowered attention span
- Hypervigilance

### Emotional Reactions
- Anxiety and fear
- Depression
- Denial and numbness
- Guilt
- Feelings of helplessness
- Irritability
- Anger and blaming
- Tearfulness

If the above symptoms are overwhelming, persist for several weeks, and/or you find yourself unable to continue with your normal daily activities (e.g., staying in bed all day), we strongly recommend that you consult with a mental health or health professional. UNLV students can receive free and confidential assistance from Student Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) located within the Student Recreation and Wellness Center. Contact (702) 895-3627 to schedule an appointment during regular hours, M-Th 8-6 and F 9-5. Faculty and staff can contact our Employee Assistance Program, Ceridian LifeWorks, at (877) 234-5151, www.lifeworks.com

Again, these are normal reactions. Although painful, they are part of the recovery process. While there is little anyone can do to take away these uncomfortable feelings, there are several things you can do to take care of yourself.

**Things to try:**

1. Within the first 24 to 48 hours, periods of appropriate physical exercise alternated with relaxation will generally alleviate some of the physical reactions.
2. Structure your time. Keep busy and keep your life as normal as possible.
3. Don’t berate yourself for having these reactions. After all, they are signs of your humanity.
4. Talk to people about your feelings and reactions – talking has a powerful healing effect.
5. Be aware of and avoid attempts to numb your emotional pain with drugs or alcohol.
6. Help your friends and colleagues by sharing your feelings and asking how they are doing.
7. Don’t make any big life changes/decisions– wait a month and see if it still seems wise.
8. Eat well-balanced and regular meals.
9. Keep a journal. Write your way through those sleepless hours.
10. Engage in pleasurable activities (read a light book; watch a comedy on television).