

Coping With Emotional Reactions



Thinking about how Residential School affected you can lead to negative thoughts or memories. This brochure is designed to help you recognize the reactions you may have.

Revisiting painful memories can be an important step in the healing process. It can also lead to difficult thoughts, feelings and behaviours. You should not be surprised if you experience emotional reaction hours, days or weeks later. This is perfectly normal.

When past emotions or memories are triggered, you need to be kind to yourself and others. It is helpful to have a plan of how to take care of yourself as a way to honour what you have been through.

These are some common reactions you may experience:

Spiritual

- Wondering about your spiritual/religious beliefs and/or values, doubting the goodness and kindness of people, not feeling in touch with yourself.

Behavioural

- Flashbacks, agitation, appetite changes, addictions, quick to anger, isolating self, mood swings, shock, conflict in relationships, can't concentrate.

Physical

- Trouble sleeping, nightmares, stomach ache, nausea, general body aches, headaches, crying, panic attacks.

Emotional

- Sadness, anger, frustration, feeling alone, mistrust of others, feeling of guilt, shame, blame, fear, hopelessness, overwhelmed.

Important things to know:

- If you experience any of the symptoms listed in this brochure, please know that it is not uncommon. If these symptoms last longer than a few weeks, consider talking to someone who can help you.
- It is important to reach out and talk to others for support to help you deal with these feelings as soon as possible.
- DO NOT remain alone if you are having thoughts of hurting yourself or hurting others. Tell someone you feel safe with. These thoughts are often temporary and talking with someone you trust can really help.
- Healing is possible. Though it can sometimes be difficult and painful, healing is a journey that can make life better and more enjoyable.



24 HOUR CRISIS LINE > 1-866-925-4419
Canada.ca/Health

Some Self-Care Strategies

When dealing with emotional reactions, it can be helpful to talk someone you feel comfortable with.

Are you a former Residential School student? Is a family member a former Residential School student? If so, counselling, emotion support and cultural support are available to you and your family members.

Support is provided through counselling, cultural supports such as Elders or Indigenous community workers who will listen, talk and provide support.

If you are not sure what kind of support you need, or to get more information about health support call:

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Some Self-Care Strategies

Here are some suggestions for self-care:

- Be kind to yourself.
- Take walks and exercise.
- Get out on the land.
- Smudge, pray, sing.
- Sew, drum, dance.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Laugh, cry, talk.
- Meditate, sleep, get plenty of rest.
- Seek spiritual or religious support.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Ask for help.
- Seek counseling.



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