

What are “Triggers”?

You may be experiencing emotional and/or physical reactions, but don't know why. You may be having these reactions related to “triggers”. A trigger is a piece of an event that intrudes into the present and reminds you of what happened in the past.

Triggers can be anything that reminds you of the event including, but not limited to:

- Smells
- Sights
- Sounds
- Weather
- Things people say
- Things people do
- Certain objects or situations

When confronted with a trigger, you may have physical symptoms such as:

- Racing heartbeat
- Sweaty palms
- Sinking stomach
- Sensitivity to touch
- Fear
- Anger
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Flashbacks

(The above has been excerpted from “Coping With Trauma” by Mt. Carmel Crime & Trauma Assistance Program).

Experiencing triggers can be a “normal” reaction to the physical and emotional trauma you've been through. Triggers can be difficult to deal with and they may feel scary at times, but you are not alone in your experience. By identifying specific things that may lead to you being triggered (a scent, a model of car, etc.) we can work with you to come up with a plan. We will discuss how to minimize reactions to triggers, as well as explore ways of cope with triggers.



We Can Help!

SARN advocates are available 24/7 to assist survivors in person at the hospital and/or with law enforcement following a sexual assault. We can also help connect survivors to resources at HelpLine & in the community.

Our advocates are specially trained to deal with issues surrounding trauma and the aftermath of sexual assault. We're also available to assist friends and family members who have been affected by this event.

Our SARN Coordinator provides crisis intervention as well as long-term advocacy to those who've experienced sexual assault to help survivors deal with their trauma. This service can be in person, or over the phone, depending on what the survivor chooses. HelpLine can refer people to trauma-informed therapy and groups. We also offer:

- An annual retreat and other Survivor - focused events, groups, & workshops dealing with trauma.
- Books and other materials that may be helpful.
- 24/7 free crisis, support, and information hotline.

Even if the assault happened years ago, the SARN program at HelpLine can still help. Unfortunately, many survivors do not think they need help until months or years after the assault. Remember, it's never too late to get help!

“The SARN program was informative, encouraging, and empowering.” - Survivor

Delaware County Office:
11 N. Franklin St.
Delaware, Ohio 43015
24/7 Help: 740.369.3316

Morrow County Office
950 Meadow Drive, Suite B
Mt. Gilead, Ohio 43338
24/7 Help: 419.947.2520

Crawford/Wyandot Office
97 Houpt Drive Suite W
Upper Sandusky, Ohio 43351
24/7 Help: 419.947.2520

Call or text us:
740.369.3316, 419.947.2520 or text 'helpline' to 898211
1.800.684.234 (local toll free)
Deaf and Hard of Hearing dial 711 or 1.800.750.0750
Language Services Available

HelpLine is a provider agency of the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health & Recovery Services Board, a member of United Ways of Delaware, Morrow, & Union Counties, partially funded by SourcePoint, the Ohio AG Crime Victims Services Office, Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, Ohio Department of Health, and private donations. HelpLine is certified by the Ohio Dept of Mental Health & Addiction Services, the American Association of Suicidology & accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. HelpLine is an equal opportunity employer/provider.

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HelpLine

SARN
Sexual Assault Response Network

Serving Delaware, Morrow, Crawford, & Wyandot Counties



**A Guide for
Survivors of
Trauma
& Sexual Assault**



"I felt like I was going crazy! SARN showed me that I was not alone and helped me start the healing process." - Survivor

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual activity that you do not consent to. Examples can be when you are:

- **Tricked**
- **Coerced**
- **Threatened or forced**
- **Unconscious**
- **Substantially impaired/intoxicated**
- **Unable to consent in any circumstance for any reason**

Sexual assault is a crime of power and control. It is a violent act whether or not physical force is used. Because it is often overwhelming and unexpected, it becomes a traumatic event regardless of what someone else may deem the severity of the assault to be.

Any action of power and control along sexual lines may affect you in some way. Each survivor reacts differently, even if the crime may seem somewhat similar. There is no "right" way for a survivor to react. As long as you are not hurting yourself or others you are doing what you personally need to do. In order to cope with and process this traumatic event, it is helpful to get support.

Remember, it is not your fault, you are not to blame, and you are not alone!

What is trauma?

As Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary trauma can be:

"A disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury."

While each situation is unique, there are common patterns to dealing with a traumatic event.

- Traumatic events cause a crisis response in our brains which can last for a period of time (i.e. days to weeks). During this time, your brain is functioning differently and it is hard to think or act "like normal".
- After this initial period, people often feel like their lives have been changed permanently. Some people decide to act as if the event didn't occur, or may try to cope with the traumatic event on their own. Other people may seek help &/or speak with a friend, family member, advocate, or counselor.

Some physical & emotional symptoms of Trauma

- Pounding heart, jumping heartbeat
- Nausea
- Nightmares
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Changes in eating habits
- Easily startled
- Repeated re-living of the traumatic event in memories
- Fear
- Irritability or Anxiety
- Guilt
- Feelings of low self-worth
- Feelings of self-blame
- Feeling numb...detached
- Spirituality: "why me?"...awareness of the fragility of life
- Anger/Rage at the assailant

(Excerpted from Coping With Trauma by Mt. Carmel Crime & Trauma Assistance Program. Please note that this is just a partial list).

What can help?

Getting trauma-informed therapy as soon as possible may help a person process what happened and minimize difficulties associated with it. Additionally, the following strategies may also be helpful:

- Speaking with supportive friends/family
- Getting physical exercise (e.g. walking)
- Journaling or writing about your experience
- Taking care of yourself, physically (e.g. eating well, exercising, and getting rest) - even if it's difficult.
- Watch your consumption of either things that can stimulate you (e.g. coffee) or depress you (e.g. alcohol).

It's okay to spend time doing things other than talking or thinking about the event. Find what works as a healthy distraction for you (reading, cooking with a new recipe, watching a movie, playing with a pet, cleaning, doing a crossword, taking part in aerobic exercise etc.).

Relaxing is important as well since it brings us into the present moment. Concentrating on your breathing is one way to do this. Inhale slowly and picture bringing fresh, healing energy into your body. When you exhale, picture all the tension and stress leaving your body. Do this until you feel grounded.

Other ideas to try and bring yourself into the present moment are: Eat a peppermint or tart candy, drink a glass of water, repeatedly toss a stress ball from left to right hand, type on a keyboard, hold an ice cube tightly in one hand, sing loudly, or repeat your name/date/location.



Call the free, confidential hotline 740.369.3316, 419.947.2520, local toll free 1.800.684.2324