

THE "UNSPOKEN" TRAUMA



POST-TRAUMA SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS

An initiative by: Central Region (Singapore) Trauma Services,
National Healthcare Group

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A. INTRODUCTION

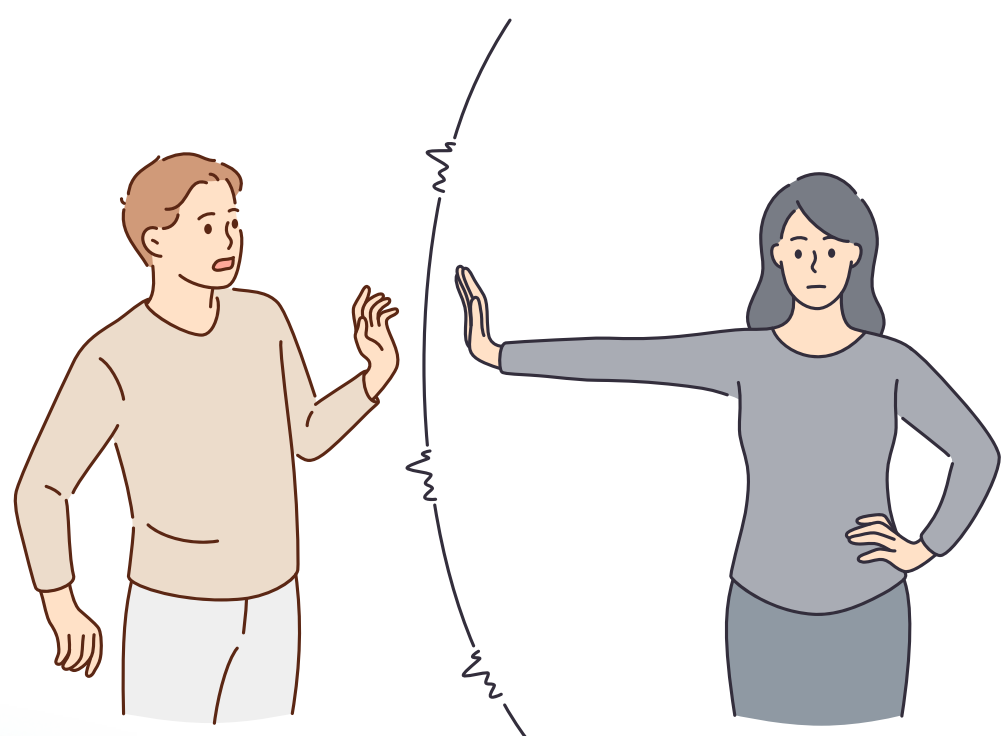
Trauma can occur in the form of an emotional stress that undermines our abilities to cope and having long-term effects on our body. We experience trauma after being part of a distressing event or accident. Depending on the complexity of injuries, recovery may take days, months to years.

B. SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

Some common signs and symptoms to identify post-traumatic stress include:

#1 RE-EXPERIENCING

- Flashbacks
- Recurring nightmares
- Distressing thoughts
- Physical reactions, e.g. sweating, heart-racing or trembling



#2 AVOIDANCE

- Staying away from places or activities
- Keeping busy all the time
- Inability to remember details of the trauma
- Numbing or cutting off feelings

#3 NEGATIVE MOOD

- Blaming oneself or others
- Feelings of anger, shame or guilt
- Loss of interest in activities used to enjoy
- Hold negative beliefs



#4 REACTIVITY

- Easily startled
- Feeling tense
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling self-destructive



For some people, these symptoms generally improve naturally over a few weeks. However, do talk to your family doctor or a mental health professional if these symptoms are affecting your ability to cope or perform your daily activities, and/or very distressing and persist for more than 4 weeks after the traumatic event.

The recovery journey from trauma is different for everyone, but generally starts with re-establishing safety and stabilization.

C. RE-ESTABLISHING SAFETY AND STABILIZATION

Establishing safety starts within yourselves by focusing on your physical and mental well-being. This means that you need to attend to any ailments, eat healthy food, exercise regularly, sleep adequately, and follow up with your medical appointment. Creating or returning to your routine may give some sense of normalcy and help create a sense of safety.

Learning to manage your emotional distress is also important in establishing safety. There are plenty of activities that are relaxing. Find one that resonates with you. Others may require professional support and guidance in their healing journey.

Always reach out for help when you feel like you require more support.



D. SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES

When we are in a state of high alert (which is called “hyper-arousal state”), we may feel as if we were in danger, even though we are not. We may notice ourselves feeling irritable, very anxious, scared, easily startled or angry.

Below are some of the techniques you may tap on:

GROUNDING USING 5 SENSES

When you are having flashbacks or negative emotions, your mind travels to the past, recalling painful memories of the traumatic event, which may leave you with negative feelings.

Grounding helps to re-orient your mind and body by shifting your attention back to the here and now where you are safe, away from the flashbacks or negative emotions. It helps you calm down and regain a sense of control.

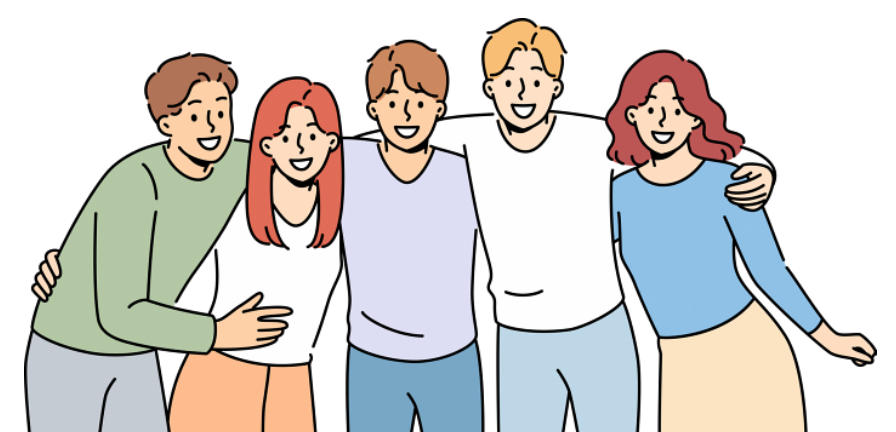


RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Intentionally make time to engage in activities that relaxes you, such as spending time outdoors, doing your hobbies or engaging in pleasant activities.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR “SAFE” PERSON

Forging meaningful connections with people who are nurturing and caring may help to calm and comfort you.



DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

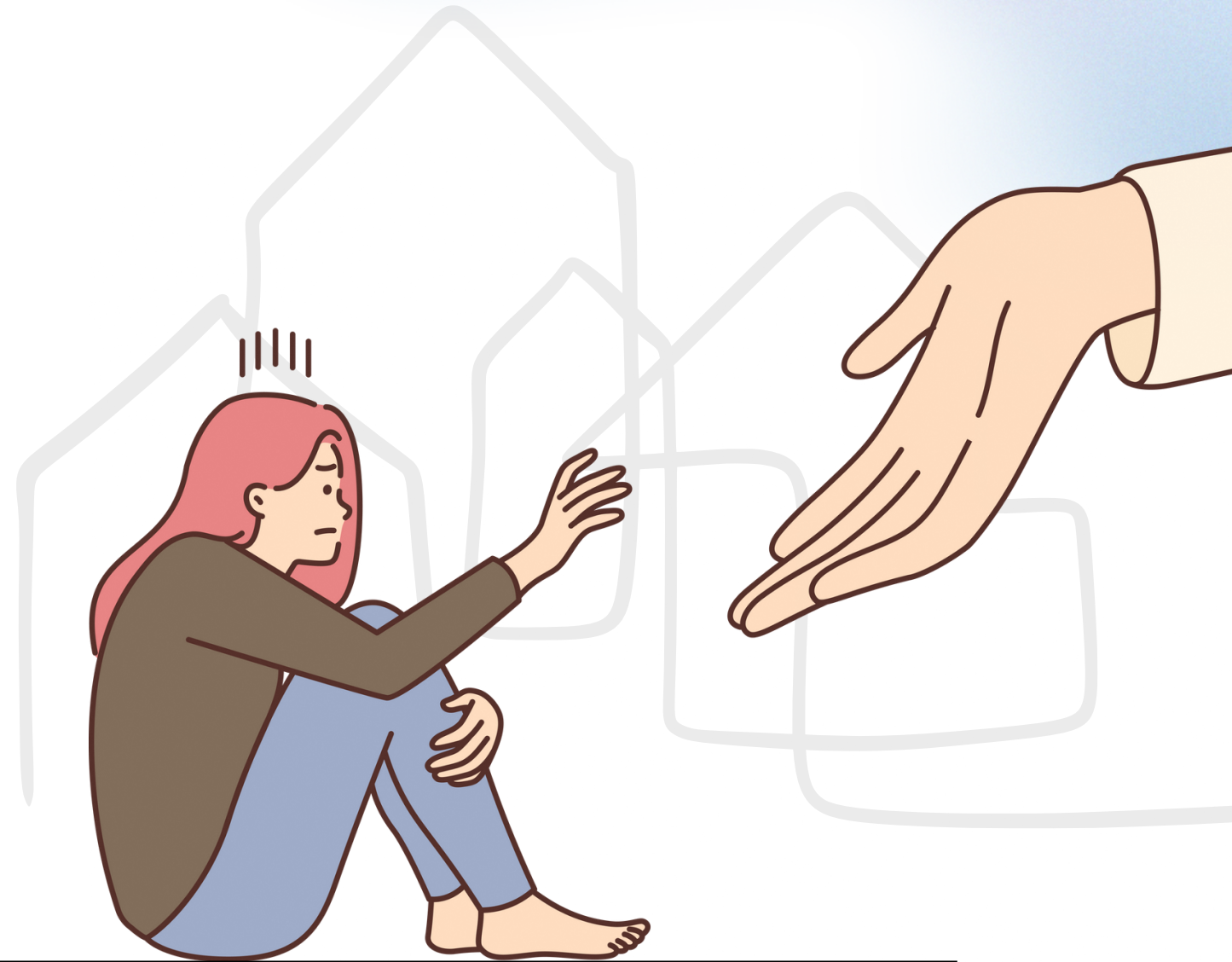
When our brain perceives a threat, our breathing usually becomes shorter and faster. Taking deep and slow breaths can send signals to our brain and body that we are safe.

Tip: Some people find it helpful to count in their head or imagine a rectangle as they inhale, pause and exhale.

E. YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Remember that recovery is a process. It takes time to heal physically and mentally.

You are never alone in your recovery journey.



24-HOUR HELPLINES

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS): 1-767

Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Mental Health Helpline: 6389 2222

OTHER HELPLINES

Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH): 1800-283-7019

Silver Ribbon Singapore: 6386 1928 or 6509 0271

TOUCHline: 1800 377 2252

Care Corner Counselling Helpline (Mandarin): 1800 353 5800

CHAT: 6493 6500/ 6493 6501

FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES (FSCS)

Family Services – Ministry of Social and Family Development (msf.gov.sg)

CAREGIVERS

Caregivers Alliance Limited | Supporting Caregivers | Singapore (cal.org.sg)

ONLINE RESOURCES

KTPH Health Library– Handbook for Caregivers on Depression and Anxiety

Free Mental Health Awareness & Wellness Resources in Singapore | mindline.sg

COVID-19 Mental Health Resources – My Mental Health (stayprepared.sg)

Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT) <http://www.chat.mentalhealth.sg/ec2.sg> – Fei Yue (fy.cs.org)

Health Matters: Recovering from Trauma