

Try this relaxation technique

- Get yourself comfortable either by sitting or lying down somewhere quiet, if you wish, close your eyes
- Become aware of your breathing, its rhythm, depth or shallowness, and its speed.
- Put one hand on your upper chest and one just below your ribs on your belly button.
- Slowly let out your breath.
- Gently breathe in, so that you feel your chest rise slowly under your hand.
- Breathe out again, feeling your chest fall, and make sure you breathe out a little longer than normal
- Pause for a few moments and then repeat the process again.

Or try this one:

- Get yourself comfortable either by sitting or lying down somewhere quiet, if you wish, close your eyes
- Breathe in through your nose slowly
- Breathe out through your mouth slowly
- Do this 5 times
- Curl up your toes really tight and count to 5, now release slowly. Try this again
- This time make a tight fist with both hands and count to 5, now release slowly. Try this again
- Try lifting your shoulders up to your ears as high as you can and count to 5, release slowly. Try this again
- Finally squeeze your face as tight as you can (squeeze your eyes, mouth and nose shut) and count to 5, now release slowly. Try this again

## Feeling relaxed?

To make best use of these techniques you need to:

- Practice everyday
- Use the techniques in stressful situations
- Learn to relax your muscles without having to tense them first

## Facts about Post Traumatic Stress

- Is a treatable condition, you can get better
  - Flashbacks and nightmares will become less powerful and less common as time goes on
  - Trauma can occur with no warning, making it difficult for people to cope
  - Your mind keeps an image of the trauma to remind you in the future to not get into that situation again. Therefore it is natural for your mind to show these images as a way of self protection
  - Reactions to trauma are natural and are not a sign that you are weak
  - People who have experienced trauma may find it difficult to trust people. Your therapist should be understanding of this
- It is important to remember that as a refugee:**
- You may have seen or been involved in traumatic events that have brought you to this country.
  - The process of seeking asylum and adapting to living in a new country can be very stressful.

Therefore you may deal with it in a variety of ways. Post traumatic stress can be a normal reaction to what you are currently feeling and going through. However, if you feel it is affecting your everyday life it is important that you seek help.

# Post Traumatic Stress

## Advice for Refugees

We would like to acknowledge that other cultures have different ways of dealing with Mental Health issues. The purpose of this leaflet is to provide some of the information that may help you to deal with difficulties you may be having. If symptoms persist please consult your doctor

# Do you have Post Traumatic Stress?

## How do you feel

- Nervous, worried
- Tense, on edge, unsettled
- Unreal, strange
- Sad
- Angry
- Depressed
- Crying

## What happens to your body

- Heart races & pounds
- Chest feels tight
- Muscles are tense & stiff
- Feel tired
- Body aches
- Cry
- Stomach hurts

## Common thoughts

- "It's my fault"
- "I can't cope"
- "I can't be bothered anymore"
- "Why did I have to happen to me?"

## How do you think

- Can not concentrate
- Always worrying
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Unable to make a decision
- Feel regret, shame or guilt
- Blame yourself for what happened
- Worry it will happen again

- Have trouble sleeping
- Feel jumpy
- Reliving the trauma

## What you do

- Avoid things that remind you of what happened to you
- Avoid people
- Avoid being alone
- Drink, smoke more
- Pace up & down
- Loss of interest
- Can't sit & relax

By ticking the boxes you can see how you are feeling

# How can I help myself?

- Try and make sense of what happened to you
    - Talk about what happened to friends or a therapist
    - Write down what happened to you. This can allow you to regain some control over the thoughts instead of them intruding upon you.
  - Think positive, Use words such as "I'm safe now" or "that is the past" or "I survived"
  - Try to put some time aside each day to look at positive things in your life at the moment.
  - When symptoms are bad, try to think about something else or do an activity to help reduce the difficult thoughts
  - Keep yourself busy
    - Takes your mind off things
    - Helps you sleep
  - Exercise
    - Helps you sleep better
    - Helps relax your muscles
- You don't have to do a sport, a 30 minute walk a day is fine
- Eat healthily
    - Try to eat plenty of fruit & vegetables
    - Try to eat regular meals
    - Keeps your energy levels up
    - Keeps you well
  - Do things that relax you
    - Have a warm bath
    - Listen to music
    - Read a book

# Having nightmares or flashbacks?

You may have nightmares or flashbacks if you are:

- Stressed, Anxious, Depressed
- Recovering from or have seen a traumatic event

Having nightmares or flashbacks can be a normal reaction to how you are feeling and by following some of the tips in this guide they will reduce in number or eventually stop altogether.

Your mind may use nightmares or flashbacks to deal with how you are feeling. It is important that you try to deal with your problems rather than avoiding them by taking drugs or drinking to much alcohol

## When you have a nightmare or flashback:

- Use a relaxation technique to help you get back to sleep or calm you down
- Try putting the radio or TV on when you go back to sleep. This will take your mind off the nightmare you just had.
- Think positive, remind yourself that it is a dream or flashback and isn't really happening. Use words such as "I'm safe now" or "that is the past" or "I survived"

If the nightmares become too frightening and you are unable to sleep or the flashbacks start interfering with your daily life, it is important that you let your doctor know. The doctor can then refer you to someone who can help.

