

How to Manage Anniversary Reactions After Trauma

Without even looking at a calendar, our bodies and minds remember the season, month or day of trauma from the past. It's normal to have strong reactions, thoughts and feelings to a disaster or traumatic event, months and even years later. Not everyone experiences anniversary reactions in the same way or at all. It's important in the healing process to acknowledge, name and address reactions as they surface during these times. Healing is a distinctive experience and, as time progresses, with support from family, friends, fellow survivors and mental health professionals, as well as healthy coping practices, these "traumaversaries" will be more manageable.

COMMON ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS

- Frustration, restlessness, sadness
- Guilt and grief
- Fear, anxiety, depression
- Memories, flashbacks, hypervigilance
- Physical symptoms like nausea, over or under sleeping, etc.



BE AWARE OF ACTIVATORS

- News, social media
- Sounds, smells, sights
- Events, celebrations, seasons, holidays near anniversary date
- Reminders specific to your trauma



WAYS TO GET THROUGH IT

1. Give yourself grace and time
2. Let go of the compare game, there's no 'should be' in healing
3. Commemorate with a new positive association
4. Seek support from your peers and loved ones
5. Practice grounding techniques
6. Keep your normal routines
7. Plan ahead to minimize stress during this time period
8. Engage in healthy activities and things that provide comfort
9. Purposefully use positive self talk, keep a hope filled internal dialogue
10. Step out of your box and help others, it'll fill your cup



REPEAT AFTER ME

- I am exactly where I need to be in my journey
- I am safe. This feeling is temporary
- I am in control of my feelings
- I am not alone
- My courage is stronger than my fear

