

THE ANNIVERSARY OF A TRAUMA!

After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment ...Judith Lewis Herman

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ The anniversary of a trauma can cause flashbacks and a return of the terrifying emotions that can last a few days or weeks
- ❖ It can also provide an opportunity for emotional healing and the opportunity to work through the grieving process
- ❖ Movies, pictures, media coverage, sounds such as the police or helicopters, and social media can all trigger memories and emotions of the trauma
- ❖ Common anniversary reactions include:
 - ❖ Feelings of terror, fear, anger, helplessness, depression
 - ❖ Painful memories, restless sleep, dreams, and nightmares
 - ❖ Mental replaying of images and scenes of the trauma
 - ❖ Grief over losses and disbelief related to the event
 - ❖ Jumpiness, irritability, hypervigilance, and startled responses
 - ❖ Survivor guilt
- ❖ Recovery from a trauma takes time and it is important to understand that these emotions are normal for a very abnormal experience
- ❖ The anniversary of a trauma also provides an opportunity to reflect upon changes that have occurred since the event including personal rebuilding, challenges overcome, recognition of supportive family and friends, and awareness of personal strengths

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Recognize that anniversary reactions are common for those who experience a trauma
- ❖ Do not expect it to be a normal day and do not isolate
- ❖ Change your thinking to being a survivor rather than a victim of the trauma
- ❖ Seek extra support from family, friends, and therapists
- ❖ Remember that the event is in the past but the hurt and anger can linger; the anniversary reaction will be over within a few weeks
- ❖ Plan ahead for emotional reactions and reduce everyday stressors
- ❖ If the date is too emotionally overwhelming, avoid being home and take time to get away
- ❖ Reduce watching the news or social media that reminds you of the trauma
- ❖ Honor the memory of those lost by participating in a charity event, making a donation, or remembering them with a poem, a writing, or a song
- ❖ Create a ritual like lighting a candle, listening to soft music, visiting a religious institution
- ❖ Be proactive and help others; donate to charities, give blood, feed the homeless, etc.
- ❖ Seek professional help if you are unable to cope with your anniversary reactions or think that you have not made progress in healing from the trauma

WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com

Joel I. Kimmel, Ph.D. P.A. and Associates
5551 N University Drive, Suite 202
Coral Springs FL 33067