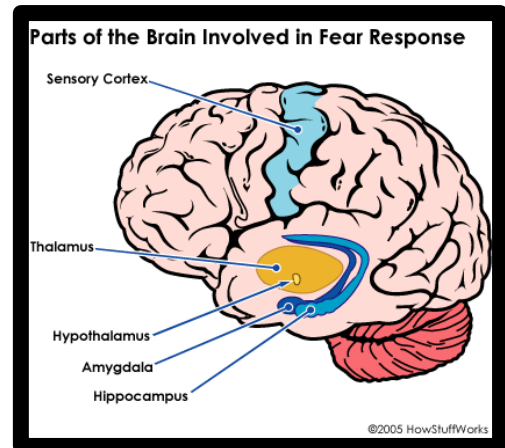


Common Responses to Sexual Assault

Survivors of sexual assault report a variety of responses and symptoms during and after an assault. Survivors may experience symptoms immediately, weeks, months, or even years after an assault has occurred. All responses you may be experiencing are **normal reactions** to an **abnormal event**.

Common Responses During an Assault:

- ✓ Traumas, such as sexual assault, can cause an automatic and unavoidable neurological response, commonly referred to as *Fight-Flight-Freeze*.
- ✓ Many victims of sexual assault report experiencing the *Freeze* response, during which the person is temporarily paralyzed despite experiencing extreme fear in the moment.



Common Symptoms and Responses After an Assault:

- ✓ Headaches and/or backaches
- ✓ Gastrointestinal stress
- ✓ Changes in sleep and/or appetite
- ✓ Increased startle response
- ✓ Feeling disoriented
- ✓ Experiencing flashbacks
- ✓ Intrusive thoughts
- ✓ Weakened immune system
- ✓ Feelings of fear and anxiety
- ✓ Hyper-alertness or hypervigilance
- ✓ Thoughts of suicide
- ✓ Anger, irritability and/or restlessness
- ✓ Emotional mood swings
- ✓ Minimizing the assault
- ✓ Emotional numbing
- ✓ Grief
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Inability to concentrate and/or focus
- ✓ Difficulty remembering
- ✓ Self-blame
- ✓ Denial
- ✓ Avoiding thoughts/feelings/places/things related to the assault

There is no right or wrong way to feel or react after a sexual assault. Trauma can manifest in many different ways. **Any symptom or response is normal.**

Many of the symptoms listed are associated with PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder. Approximately 30% of sexual assault survivors develop symptoms for PTSD and/or Major Depressive Disorder.

If you or someone you know are experiencing any of these symptoms, you're not alone. Finding coping techniques that work for you when symptoms of the trauma are overwhelming can help you feel more grounded in the moment, and resources are available at DU and in the community for support.

Coping Techniques

To use on your own

5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Technique



Name five things you see.



Name four things you can touch.



Name three things you can hear.



Name two things you can smell.



Name one thing you can taste.

Deep Breathing

- ✓ Take three deep, slow breaths. Inhale for a count of eight, hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of eight.

Self-Care

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✓ Exercise | ✓ Take a bath | ✓ Cook a good meal |
| ✓ See friends | ✓ Spend time with pets | ✓ Journal |
| ✓ Watch a funny movie | ✓ Listen to music | ✓ Engage in spiritual practice |
| ✓ Read a book | ✓ Go for a walk | |

Resources

For support on campus and in the community

Confidential DU Resources	Confidential Community Resources
CAPE 303-871-3853 Provides free confidential advocacy and support for survivors of sexual assault, harassment, stalking and relationship violence. Appointments available M-F 8am-4:30pm	Blue Bench 303-322-7273 Denver's sexual assault prevention and support center, offering 24/7 confidential support and advocacy, individual and group therapy, and case management.
Health and Counseling Center 303-871-2205 Offers individual and group counseling for DU students, staff, and faculty. Including, the Stronger Together group for survivors of sexual assault.	Survivors Organizing for Liberation 888-557-441 Resource for LGBTQ identified individuals. Services include: 24hr hotline, advocacy, support groups, resources, and safety planning
Counselor on Call 303-871-2205 After hours crisis line for mental health and gender violence needs.	Safehouse Denver 303-318-9989 24hr Domestic Violence hotline
University Chaplain 303-871-4488	Colorado Crisis Services 844-493-8255 24hr Colorado crisis line with online chat available http://coloradocrisisservices.org/