

# ACTIVIST-TRAUMA

## We are a small group of volunteers offering information and support for activists.

If you or your friends have experienced or witnessed police violence (or violence from anyone else), if you have been arrested, if what happens in Scotland brings up old memories, if the symptoms on the other side of the flyer are familiar or you feel wobbly after an action, you might like to talk to us. All information will be treated confidentially.

## We are covering the following areas:

- Information about post-traumatic stress
- How to help yourself / how to help your friends
- Individual support and group debriefings
- Contacts and information for additional support

## We have two bases, where you can drop in:

**Edinburgh** at the Dissent! convergence space

**Stirling** at the rural convergence space

## We offer:

1 > Daily workshops about post traumatic stress:

What is it?, What signs and symptoms to look out for? How to deal with it?

For location and time ask at the info points.

2 > A comfortable space where you can de-stress, access info and people to talk to.

For location ask at the info points

3 > Facilitation of group debriefings.

Phone or drop in to arrange.

4 > 24h phone helpline during the G8 and some time afterwards,

For Edinburgh:  
079 6240 6940 (mobile)  
(we can call you back)

For Stirling:  
079 1734 5849 (mobile)

or try: 020 7871 6940  
(a landline based in Scotland)

5 > Phone support and info after the G8: every Thursday from 19-21h

or leave a message / email and we will get back to you:

00 44 (0) 20 7871 6940

6 > ASSIST, a charity dedicated to trauma care, offers a free professional helpline:

Mon -Fri from 10-16h  
(www.traumatic-stress.freereserve.co.uk)  
ASSIST Helpline : 0044 (0) 1788 560 800

**Experiencing or witnessing of violence or being arrested can result in what is known as post-traumatic stress or critical incident stress.**

## More info:

[www.activist-trauma.net](http://www.activist-trauma.net) including PTSD-briefings to download

Email: [activist\\_trauma@riseup.net](mailto:activist_trauma@riseup.net) [www.healingtrauma.pscap.org](http://www.healingtrauma.pscap.org)

## Symptoms include:

Not being able to put aside stressful images and memories, Flashbacks, Nightmares

Depression, inability to take joy in life

Not being able to feel

Withdrawal

Increased use of drugs or alcohol for self-medication

Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

Fear, anxiety, hypervigilance, panic attacks and phobias

Guilt, regret, and self-blame

Overwhelming grief

Inability to function normally, to plan or make decisions

Shame

Irritability

Suicidal thoughts and feelings

**It's important to remember that having any or all of these reactions is common. They are normal reactions to an "abnormal" situation.**

For around 70% of people these symptoms disappear naturally within 4 - 6 weeks. However, if the symptoms persist then it is advisable to seek support as it's unlikely to resolve by itself and may develop into a serious condition known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD can develop months or years after the event. A variety of different ways to help are available.

## What you can do for yourself:

Remember: Your reactions are normal, and there is help available.

Directly after a traumatic event: get somewhere safe and let someone to take care of you

Don't isolate yourself. Reach out to your friends for support.

Take the time you need to recover and be patient with yourself.

Remember: What happened is not your fault, the guilt belongs to the perpetrators.

Friends and family might not always know the best way to deal with your symptoms. Sometimes this makes things worse. Don't be afraid to challenge unhelpful support.

Avoidance is likely to make things worse in the long run.

## How to support your friends:

Be proactive about your support -trauma sufferers often withdraw and don't ask for help.

Remember that people may appear fine at first with symptoms only developing later.

Be a good listener, don't pity them, avoid speaking too soon, too long, too much.

We often tend to give advice rather than really listen; empathy is better than trying to fix.

Small things, like cooking, make a big difference, but avoid appearing patronising.

Irritability or ungratefulness are common reactions of sufferers, don't take it personally.

Saying "you should be over it by now, get on with life" is likely to make things worse.

Feeling unsupported can lead to what's called "secondary trauma" which can be worse than the initial experience.

## What to do as a group:

Set a time aside to talk about what happened. Common practice is a go-round, where everybody talks about what happened to them, what they saw, did or maybe felt.

You can approach us for a facilitated debriefing or download a guide from the webpage.

It has been shown that talking within a few days of the trauma about what happened inside the group that was involved can help to process what has happened and diminish the risk of PTSD. Don't assume that only physically injured people will be affected and remember to support the supporters. Take care of each other.