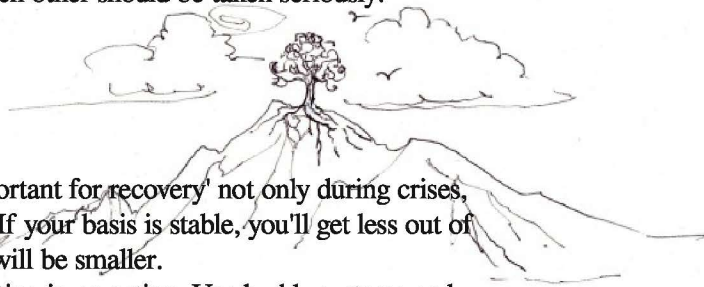


WHAT TO DO AS A GROUP?

- it's better NOT to do a plenary debriefing in the first days after the event. This might worsen reactions and cause feelings of guilt or shame. If people feel the need to talk about the event, it's better to do this in personal conversations.
- whenever possible, try as much as you can to proceed to a legal follow-up on any complaints about police violence or mistreatments at the police station.
- contact the Support & Recovery team.
- We react to (police) violence, repression or other high-stress events. It's not only normal, but also a fact. Don't contribute to macho group cultures where dealing with these reactions seems to be a taboo. It's not beneficial for anyone: not on a personal level, not for the people around us, not for the political movement in general. Care for ourselves and each other should be taken seriously.



PREVENTION IS BETTER

- use the tips as described at 'important for recovery' not only during crises, but also in your normal daily life. If your basis is stable, you'll get less out of balance and the impact of events will be smaller.
- be well prepared when participating in an action. Use buddy systems and affinity groups and take the time to discuss each others boundaries before going to an action.
- take conscious decisions before or during actions. Make sure you are well informed and keep your boundaries at that very moment in mind.
- it's a good habit to not only use a legal team for actions, but also a Support & Recovery team. Contact them in time. The Support & Recovery team can also facilitate trainings, such as an Interrogation Training, a workshop in Mental Resistance during Actions or a workshop on Reactions after High-stress Events.



SUPPORT & RECOVERY TEAM

sr-bxl@riseup.net or +32 494 64 58 06

<https://supportrecoveryteam.wordpress.com> (ENG & NL)

<https://activist-trauma.net> (ENG)



How to deal with psychological and emotional reactions after (police) violence, repression or other high-stress experiences?

One of the most amazing things of activists is that we often expose ourselves deliberately to violence if we think it's necessary. What is also amazing, is how little we know about the psychological effects of violence. We should be prepared and support each other when dealing with mental and emotional consequences of high-stress experiences.

THREE REACTIONS...

...that could occur after direct or indirect stressful experiences. You could notice all of them, a few or just one. Your balance might be disrupted by personal experiences, witnessing other people's extreme experiences, by exposure through media or conversations or by a feeling of powerlessness when it happens to others.

1. Re-experiencing

- re-occurring images and memories, when you're awake or during sleep as nightmares
- the feeling that you cannot let go of the experience
- flashbacks: the feeling of re-living the situation

2. Avoidance or suppression

- withdrawing or isolating yourself, letting go of social activities
- avoiding people, places or things that could recall memories
- loss of memory
- feeling a strong resistance or not being able to talk about it
- problematic, frequent or ongoing use of drugs or alcohol
- overloading yourself with tasks or work so that you don't have to think about it

3. Amplified emotions

- problems with sleep or concentration
- agitation, easily being startled, fears or panic attacks
- irritation, anger, emotional outbursts, feelings of shame or guilt
- depression, suicidal thoughts, re-appearance of earlier trauma's
- feeling cynical, suspicious, pessimistic or powerless
- problems with functioning in daily life or taking ordinary decisions
- emotional numbness: feeling nothing at all

These are all **normal reactions** to extreme experiences. Many people have gone through this and have recovered. People will react in different ways, not only by the nature of reactions, but also in intensity. Sometimes you may notice these reactions right after the events, sometimes it might take a while before they appear. These reactions are not only normal, but they also have a **healthy function**: these are all mechanisms of the mind to process the experience or protect you against harmful stimulus. **For about 70% of all people these reactions will fade away after four to six weeks.** Be patient and allow yourself the time for recovery!