

Trauma and the emergency services



Working in the emergency services offers an exciting career as well as the opportunity to protect communities and help individuals in need. Most people love their job. But even a great job can have bad days.

Emergency services work inevitably brings with it exposure to potentially traumatic events that involve threats to your own life as well as exposure to the injury and death of others.

After experiencing a traumatic event it is normal to feel wound up and distressed. Most emergency services personnel cope well by drawing on their natural resilience and coping strategies, their training, and the support of family and friends. However, the cumulative strain of experiencing many different traumatic events means that some will experience ongoing difficulties.



Coping with trauma

Emergency services workers

Looking after yourself

These simple strategies can make a big difference in helping you to cope with a very stressful, and often distressing job.

- Monitor your stress levels
- Every day, do something that you enjoy
- Keep in touch with people you like being with
- Look after yourself: eat healthy food; get some exercise; get enough sleep
- Make the most of your breaks at work
- Manage your time well
- Take a holiday at least once a year
- Ask for help when you need it
- Don't take on too much and over-commit yourself
- Don't rely on alcohol or drugs to make you feel better
- Use relaxation techniques and other coping skills to manage stressful situations

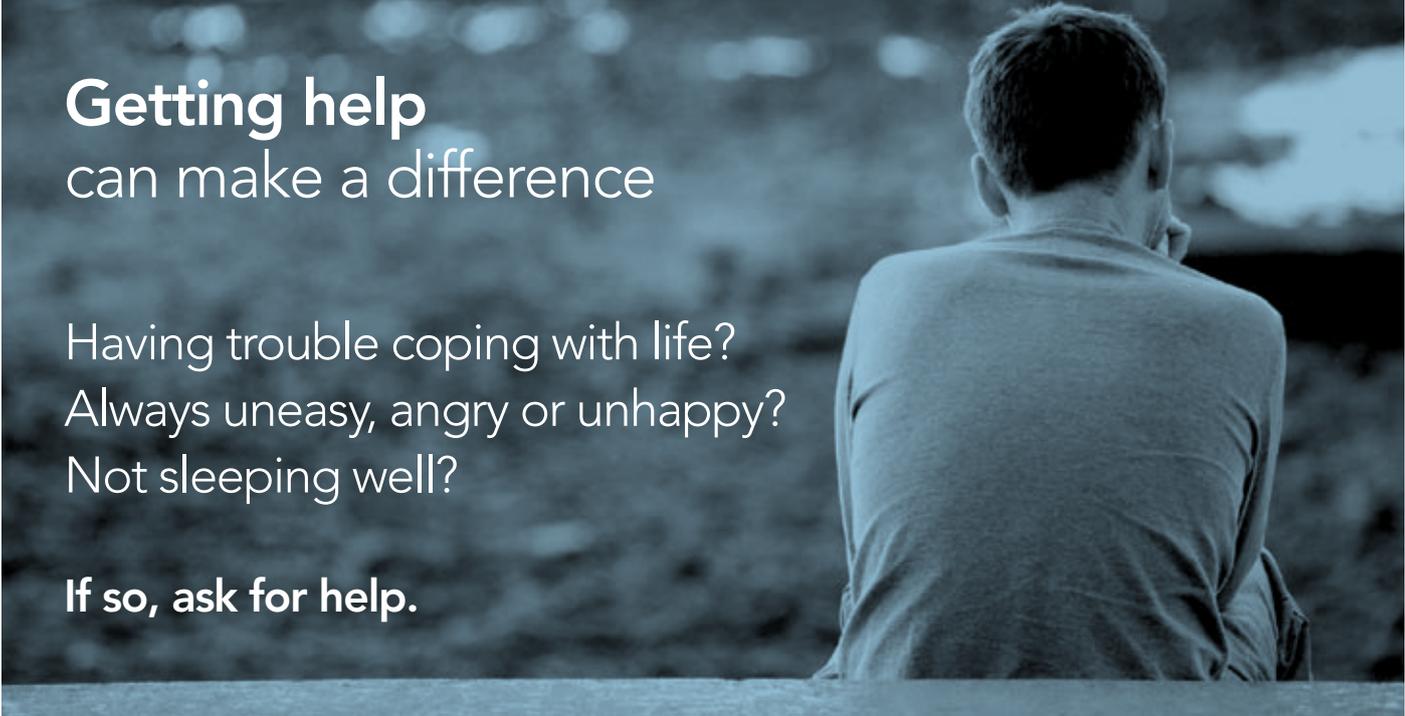
Looking after your colleagues

If you notice that someone at work doesn't seem to be coping, or has been affected by a traumatic event, then you can help by:

- Offering practical assistance, for example, offering a lift home from work
- Offering to listen, if they want to talk (but don't force them to talk)
- Suggesting that they speak to their supervisor, or contact a workplace counsellor or a GP.

Getting help

If you or someone else is concerned about how you are coping with the stressful aspects of your job, it is worth talking to a doctor or workplace counsellor. They will be able to determine if there is a problem, what the best approach might be, and provide referrals to a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker, if need be.



Getting help can make a difference

Having trouble coping with life?
Always uneasy, angry or unhappy?
Not sleeping well?

If so, ask for help.

Workers in the emergency services are routinely exposed to potentially traumatic events. Most people recover with the help of family and friends, but there are effective treatments for those needing extra support.

For more information about trauma, its effects and best practice treatments, visit www.phoenixaustralia.org