



# PERSONAL TOOL

## TRAUMA AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA – WAR IN UKRAINE



Ukrainian people in Australia and around the world are experiencing an extremely distressing and traumatic time. The threat of potential loss of life or injury to friends, family or loved ones is a very real fear being lived each and every moment. It is perfectly normal that your mind and thoughts are dominated by events in Ukraine. It's OK to recognise you cannot possibly be OK whilst living with these fears, stress or trauma. It's OK to expect yourself to respond to what's going on in Ukraine with different behaviours and responses than your usual ones.

It is important to know that your responses are the same responses other people will also be experiencing. Often knowing our reactions to traumatic events could provide a way to help ourselves or others through things. It is a very human response that we become stressed when we see other people in pain or suffering.

### Signs of a traumatic stress response can include:

- Being easily startled, jumpy or nervy	- Intrusive images, thoughts, nightmares
- Feeling that you are always 'on guard'	- Feeling numb or zoning out frequently
- More feelings of guilt, fear or grief	- Trouble sleeping
- Being more irritable than usual, or becoming angry much more easily	- Becoming highly emotional when seeing or hearing about the situation in Ukraine

### What can you do to help yourself or others manage?

Feeling powerless in response to the situation in Ukraine is a very normal human response. Here are some practical things you can do:

- **Acknowledge** - you are having physical or emotional reactions. Do not avoid or deny them – they won't go away. Tell someone like a partner, family member, mate, or your leader/manager. Share what you are experiencing with someone you trust.
- **Routine** – keep to your regular routine as much as possible. You can exercise control and find balance in this. Try to eat healthy and keep to your usual sleep routine. This can be hard when you are worried about family, friends and loved ones. Routines help us keep going and allow us to control something when there's a lot we cannot control.
- **Social media** – normally we would advise avoiding media and social media to avoid seeing lots of images that could be even more stressful. However, we know that social media may be the only way to remain connected to others. Be mindful of balancing your social media activity.
- **Kids & teenagers** – this will be even more impactful for young people who don't yet fully understand what's happening or why. Be there to support them – what they need most is to feel safe and secure. Give them time to talk with you and have an opportunity to feel better.

Remember your EAP, is here to support you whatever the nature of your concerns. For a confidential conversation with one of our experienced clinical professionals, please contact **Newport & Wildman on 1800 650 204.**

