



Significant Incident Resource for **Students** (18+)





What to do when a significant incident happens

When something serious or traumatic has happened so close to home, it can understandably have a huge impact on all aspects of your life, including your education. We wanted to reach out to you today to let you know that you are not alone and to offer some support and advice during this difficult time.

Understanding how different people respond and why

Changes to how you think, feel, and behave are a totally natural response to any traumatic event, however connected you feel to what happened. And while everyone is different, here are just a few reasons why you might notice some strong reactions because of what has happened.

- The incident itself might be particularly distressing.
- The relationship that you had with the people/person involved (e.g. you lived in the same halls, they were on the same course, attended the same lectures/seminars etc).
- It might be connected to a past trauma.
- The details of what happened may cause strong or complicated emotions like anger, fear, or distress.

Understanding and acknowledging how you (and others) might be feeling right now

Everyone reacts differently to difficult news. This is totally natural. However, here are just some emotions you might experience in the coming days, weeks, and months:

Sadness - Where you might feel upset, tearful, and experience low mood.

Loneliness - Where you might feel alone with your emotions and like nobody understands what you're going through.

Anger - Where you feel angry at what has happened and question why. You might even feel angry towards other people, too, which may affect your work (more on this below).

Disbelief - Where you can't quite believe what has happened, and it doesn't seem real.

Numbness - Where you aren't able to feel or connect with your emotions. Feeling numb is your brain's way of protecting you from tricky emotions; it can be a very common feeling when something difficult happens.



Of course, the above are just examples. It's worth noting that, as we are all unique, there might also be a range of other feelings present, too, and that's okay. It's also important to remember that not everyone will experience difficult emotions - some people might not feel affected at all, and that's okay, too.

You might also take notice of any other changes in yourself that seem different to how you would usually be. For example: some people might get quieter, others louder; some might want to fill their time or find themselves going out a lot more, others might need to slow down or find themselves going out less. These are all possible responses to a difficult situation, no matter how subtle they might appear.

How all this might impact your education or time at university

When we are affected by difficult situations, it can understandably impact other areas of life. In terms of your studies, it can have an effect on concentration, focus, productivity, and the ability to manage work loads and difficult situations, too.

In terms of other aspects of student life, it might affect your relationships with your peers, tutors and others around you, your ability to make good decisions and even your motivation to do things you usually enjoy.

How can you help yourself and others right now?

When something difficult happens, it can be overwhelming, so we thought we'd share some ideas on how you can help yourself and other people going through a similar experience.

1 Be kind with yourself: You might notice that there are a whole range of different feelings and responses in the coming weeks, which can feel overwhelming. Everyone copes differently, so it can be helpful to be especially kind and patient. Here are a few ways to put this into practice.

- **Recognising and normalising your emotions.** This can be as simple as saying, "It's completely natural for me to feel upset/sad/angry/distressed/ in disbelief right now."
- **Expressing your feelings.** You might want to cry or even shout, and that's okay if it's helpful for you. Alternatively, you might want to talk with somebody, write your feelings down, or listen to music that helps express your emotions. Do what feels right for you.
- **Taking time out to relax and recharge.** This could be as simple as taking a break from studying if you need or want it (some people find the routine of studying really helps, so taking time out isn't helpful for everyone). Taking regular breaks and only working until a particular time could also be a helpful reminder not to overstretch yourself. If you live on campus or near your university, some people might find going home for a short while helpful to take a break from everything.

Self care is so important when things feel difficult - If you notice you are partying more than usual or even isolating yourself from others suddenly, or doing anything that could potentially be harmful to you physically or emotionally, it can be useful to think about how you might take care of yourself more. For example, you might consciously think about balancing your social and study time so you're not over doing things in one area or even just making sure you're eating a balanced diet and drinking enough water.

These are just examples and for some they might not feel possible, so only do what feels right for you.

During this time, being kind to others who are affected could be helpful, even if you yourself don't feel impacted.

You can do this by:

- Asking how they are doing. Asking twice can be important to let someone know you really do want to listen to what they have to say. This might encourage them to talk about how they feel if they need to. Of course, it's also important to respect when people don't want to talk about their feelings with you, too.
- Listening to how they are feeling.
- Asking them if there is anything you can do to help them if it feels appropriate and right for you (for example, if you live with someone who is finding things difficult, this could be as simple as suggesting to do something together or offering to help out with something, or even asking them if they'd like a tea, coffee, soft drink or snack if they are studying at home).
- Send them a card or a note to let them know you are thinking of them if what has happened has affected them personally.

2 Manage possible conflict sensitively: Traumatic events can make us feel or behave in ways that we wouldn't normally. This can mean that we end up being unkind or acting differently with those around us. In a university environment whether that's on campus or where you live, it could help to acknowledge any possible conflict and explore difficult feelings together to increase understanding and support from others, too. For example: if you've had a disagreement with a housemate, taking that person to one side to talk about it calmly and sensitively might help everyone to see both sides.

If you are feeling angry or upset and don't feel like this is possible, talking to another friend or someone else you trust first could be helpful in getting their support and advice.

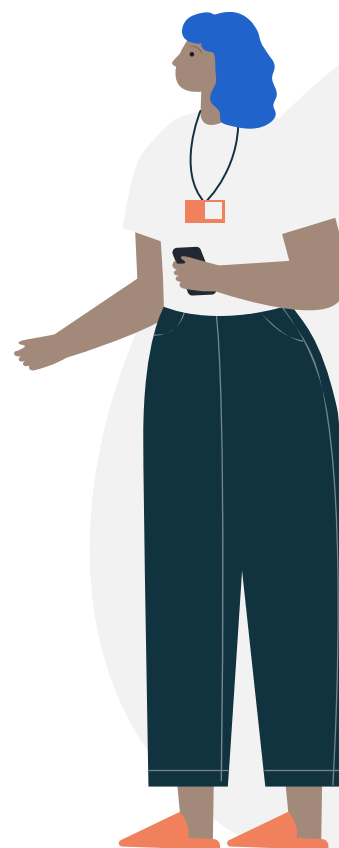
3 Reach out to university staff if you need to: When things feel difficult at university, it can help to talk it through with a tutor you get along with, someone from student services or even staff from your uni accommodation. Sometimes, reaching out for help can make us feel guilty - especially if we feel we need time off studying or help with other tasks - but remember that difficult situations can really take their toll on anybody. Asking for what you need, whatever that is, can allow you to take care of yourself so that you can feel more able to cope - both now and in the long term, too.

4 Reach out for professional support if you need to: Whether it's something you want to access now or at any time in the future, it can be useful to know what is out there. Being affected by difficult news or situations is totally normal, and it could impact someone for days, weeks, or even months while they process what has happened. But if things seem to be difficult after a longer period of time, and it's impacting your daily life, professional support might be useful.



Here are just some organisations you might want to look into.

- Qwell** A digital wellbeing platform (part of Kooth PLC) where you can access live support from a fantastic team of mental health professionals. It is also full of informative and sensitively written articles and resources about a huge range of topics. You can find out more by visiting **qwell.io**.
- Kooth** Part of the same group as the above and offers the same service to young people up to age 26 in many areas of the UK. You can find out more at [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com). Please note that Kooth has no referral system and no waiting lists, which means if a student needs support and Kooth is commissioned in their area, it's accessible whenever they need it. You can find out more at **kooth.com**.
- Samaritans** A leading mental health charity with 24/7 access to support. For more information, take a look at **samaritans.org**.
- Cruse** A national bereavement charity where you can access support and information about grief. You can find out more by visiting **cruse.org.uk**.
- Victim Support** An independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales. You can find out more at **victimsupport.org.uk**.
- Nightline** A student listening service that runs all over the UK. It is available when other on-campus student services are closed. To see if your place of education has a Nightline service, take a look at **nightline.ac.uk**.





If you are finding it difficult to cope with day-to-day living (ie, if you're struggling with going to work or taking part in normal, everyday activities), making an appointment with a GP can also be a useful step to take. If you are not registered with a GP, you can find one nearby by using this NHS search function - [nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP](https://nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp)

We realise that this letter does not change what has happened, but we hope you have found the information helpful.