What you can do about sadness or depression:

- Don’t avoid situations that used to be fun (spending time with friends/family) or important to you (school, work).
- Don’t isolate yourself from other people.
- Do at least one activity outside your home each day.
- Do keep busy. Plan your next day the night before, AND STICK TO THE PLAN. KEEP BUSY and FIGHT AVOIDANCE.
- Don’t blame yourself for what happened. Focus on taking care of yourself.

Don’t let drugs or alcohol get in the way of your recovery.

Using drugs or alcohol to deal with your distress might work in the short term, but it’s not good for your health or your recovery. Recognize feelings/situations that increase your urges to use and stay away from them. For example, feeling depressed and being around substance users increases urges for a lot of people.

How to fight these urges:

- Stay away from people, places, and situations that lead to urges to use drugs or alcohol.
- Do things that don’t involve substance use, like going to church or to a family function, or going out with friends who don’t use.
- Recognize when your emotions (anxiety and depression) are causing urges, and take steps to cope with these emotions in the healthy ways described in this brochure.

For reprints or more information about these materials please contact us at: saprev@musc.edu

For local or national rape crisis services, contact RAINN 1-800-656-HOPE

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Common Triggers of Fear Reactions

- Reminders of the event (the news, TV shows)
- Intimate contact with your partner
- People who look like the perpetrator
- Places that remind you of the assault
- Physical activity (exercise) that increases pulse
- Going out after dark

Some girls and women don’t have any of these reactions, but if you do, this is normal. Remember, physical reactions, such as your heart beating faster or breathing in and out quickly, often happen during sexual assault and are a part of your body’s normal stress reaction. Things in your environment may trigger feelings of fear, panic and thoughts about the sexual assault.

Common Reactions to Sexual Assault

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<td>Anxiety</td>
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How to Deal With Triggers: use EXPOSURE

Triggers or reminders are not usually dangerous, they may just feel that way because they were associated with the assault. One way to change your reaction to triggers is through EXPOSURE. By exposure, we mean gradually facing the situation or reminders until they no longer make you feel anxious. This is the opposite of avoidance.

Prevention of Post-Sexual Assault Stress

This brochure contains information that can help you deal with the effects of sexual assault.

SAFETY FIRST
First, decide if the situation is safe.

Start slow - tackle easy triggers first.
Break it down - break the exposure exercises into parts—for example, if you are afraid of sleeping in the dark, keep a small light on at first and then try to turn it off. If you are afraid of going to public places, you could go a short distance at first and maybe take a friend.

One Minute More - try this technique: When it feels like you need to escape the exposure situation, stay 1 more minute. Then, at the end of that minute, see if you can do it another minute. Remember, take it 1 minute at a time.

Exposure can be hard to do, so be sure to reward yourself for doing it!