

# How You Can Heal After Traumatic Events

MyWellnessScout.com

---



## Introduction

Michael wiped his tears in the hospital bathroom. He had just lost his third patient this week. No one talked about it. No one asked how he felt. He went home carrying all that pain inside.

Sound familiar? You're not alone.

---

---

## Why Trauma Hits Nurses So Hard

Nursing is like being a first responder every single day. You see things that would shock most people. You hold families as they cry. You fight to save lives and sometimes lose.

But here's what many hospitals don't tell you. Your brain needs time to process these big emotions. When you don't get that time, the trauma builds up like dirty dishes in a sink.

### The Hidden Cost of Unprocessed Trauma

Think about trauma like a cut on your arm. If you don't clean it and bandage it, what happens? It gets infected. It hurts more. It takes longer to heal.

Your emotional wounds work the same way. Without proper care, they grow bigger and deeper.

Studies show that nurses who don't get trauma support face:

- Higher rates of depression and anxiety
- More sick days and burnout
- Trouble sleeping and eating
- Problems with family relationships
- Higher risk of leaving nursing altogether

## What Critical Incident Stress Management Really Means

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a fancy name for helping people process trauma. Think of it as emotional first aid.

Just like you wouldn't ignore a bleeding patient, you shouldn't ignore emotional bleeding either.

---

## The Problem Most Hospitals Miss

Many hospitals focus on the medical side of trauma. They document what happened. They review procedures. They check if equipment worked.

But they forget about the human side. They forget that real people with real feelings went through something terrible.

This leaves nurses like you to deal with trauma alone. That's not fair, and it's not healthy.

## Signs You Need Trauma Support

Your body and mind give you signals when trauma builds up. Here are the warning signs:

### Physical Signs:

- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Headaches that won't go away
- Feeling tired all the time
- Stomach problems
- Getting sick more often

### Emotional Signs:

- Feeling numb or empty inside
- Crying more than usual
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Avoiding certain patients or units
- Feeling guilty about things that weren't your fault

### Mental Signs:

- Trouble focusing or making decisions
- Replaying the traumatic event over and over
- Forgetting important things
- Feeling like you're not a good nurse

- 
- Thinking about quitting nursing

## What Good Trauma Support Looks Like

Imagine if every time something terrible happened at work, you had a safe place to talk about it. Picture having someone who understands what you're going through.

That's what proper trauma support should be like.

### The Three Parts of Good Trauma Care

**1. Immediate Support (First 24-48 Hours)** Right after a traumatic event, you need someone to check on you. This isn't about blame or fixing mistakes. It's about making sure you're okay.

Good immediate support includes:

- A supervisor asking how you're doing
- Time to talk about what happened
- Permission to take breaks if needed
- Clear information about what comes next

**2. Short-Term Support (First Few Weeks)** Your brain needs time to make sense of what happened. During this time, you might feel confused or upset. That's normal.

Short-term support includes:

- Regular check-ins with a counselor
- Flexible scheduling if possible
- Access to mental health resources
- Support groups with other nurses

---

**3. Long-Term Support (Ongoing)** Some traumatic events stay with you for months or years. You need ongoing support to heal completely.

Long-term support includes:

- Counseling services through your job
- Training on how to handle trauma
- A workplace culture that talks openly about mental health
- Resources for family members who are also affected

## **Why Hospitals Struggle with Trauma Support**

Most hospitals want to help their nurses. But they often don't know how. Here's why trauma support is so hard to get right:

### **Money Concerns**

Good trauma support costs money. Hospitals have to pay for counselors, training, and time off. Some hospitals worry about the cost more than their nurses' wellbeing.

### **Old-School Thinking**

Some hospital leaders still think nurses should just "tough it out." They believe that dealing with trauma is part of the job. This thinking is outdated and harmful.

### **Not Knowing What Works**

Many hospitals don't know what good trauma support looks like. They might offer an employee assistance program but nothing more specific.

### **Fear of Liability**

Some hospitals worry that talking about trauma might create legal problems. They think it's safer to say nothing at all.

---

## How to Get the Support You Need

You don't have to wait for your hospital to fix this problem. Here's how to get trauma support now:

### At Work

- Talk to your manager about your needs
- Ask HR about mental health benefits
- Start conversations with coworkers
- Request trauma training for your unit
- Join or start a support group

### On Your Own

- Find a therapist who understands healthcare workers
- Join online support groups for nurses
- Practice self-care activities that help you relax
- Learn about trauma and how it affects you
- Talk to trusted friends and family

### Professional Resources

Many organizations offer help specifically for healthcare workers:

- The American Nurses Association has mental health resources
- Crisis hotlines are available 24/7
- Online therapy platforms offer flexible scheduling
- Some programs are free or low-cost

---

## Creating a Trauma-Informed Workplace

The best hospitals understand that trauma is part of healthcare. They create environments where nurses feel safe talking about difficult experiences.

### What This Looks Like

- Leaders who check on staff after difficult cases
- Regular debriefing sessions after traumatic events
- Mental health resources that are easy to access
- A culture where asking for help is seen as strong, not weak
- Training that teaches everyone how to support each other

### How to Push for Change

You can help create this kind of workplace:

- Share your experiences with leadership
- Propose specific trauma support programs
- Partner with other nurses who want change
- Bring research about trauma's impact on patient care
- Suggest pilot programs to test new approaches

## The Ripple Effect of Healing

When nurses get good trauma support, everyone benefits. You heal faster and come back stronger. Your patients get better care. Your family relationships improve. The whole healthcare system works better.

Think of it like this: When you're on an airplane, they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask first. Then you can help others. Trauma support is your oxygen mask.

---

## Taking the First Step

Healing from trauma doesn't happen overnight. It's like learning to walk again after an injury. You start with small steps and build from there.

Your first step might be:

- Talking to one trusted person about what you're going through
- Calling a mental health hotline
- Researching therapists in your area
- Asking your supervisor about available resources
- Starting a journal to track your feelings

Remember, asking for help isn't giving up. It's taking control of your healing.

## Building Your Support Network

You don't have to face trauma alone. Building a strong support network is like building a safety net. The more people you have supporting you, the safer you feel.

### Your Professional Network

- Colleagues who understand your job
- Supervisors who care about your wellbeing
- Mental health professionals who specialize in healthcare workers
- Professional organizations and unions

### Your Personal Network

- Family members who love you
- Friends outside of healthcare
- Support groups with people who've been through similar experiences
- Online communities where you can share anonymously



---

## The Path Forward

Healthcare is changing. More hospitals are recognizing that nurse wellbeing affects patient care. More research shows the importance of trauma support. More nurses are speaking up about their needs.

You're part of this change. Every time you ask for help, you make it easier for the next nurse to do the same. Every time you support a colleague, you're building a better workplace.

Your trauma doesn't define you. Your healing doesn't make you weak. Your courage to seek help makes you human.

## You Matter

Here's what every nurse needs to hear: You matter. Your feelings matter. Your mental health matters. You deserve support after traumatic events.

You chose nursing because you wanted to help people. Now it's time to let people help you. The strongest nurses are the ones who know when to ask for backup.

Your patients need you to be healthy and whole. Your family needs you present and engaged. Most importantly, you deserve to feel okay after going through something terrible.

The next time you face a traumatic event at work, remember Michael from the beginning of this story. Don't let yourself cry alone in the bathroom. Reach out. Get help. Heal properly.

You've got this. And you don't have to do it alone.

#NurseWellbeing #TraumaSupport #HealthcareWorkers