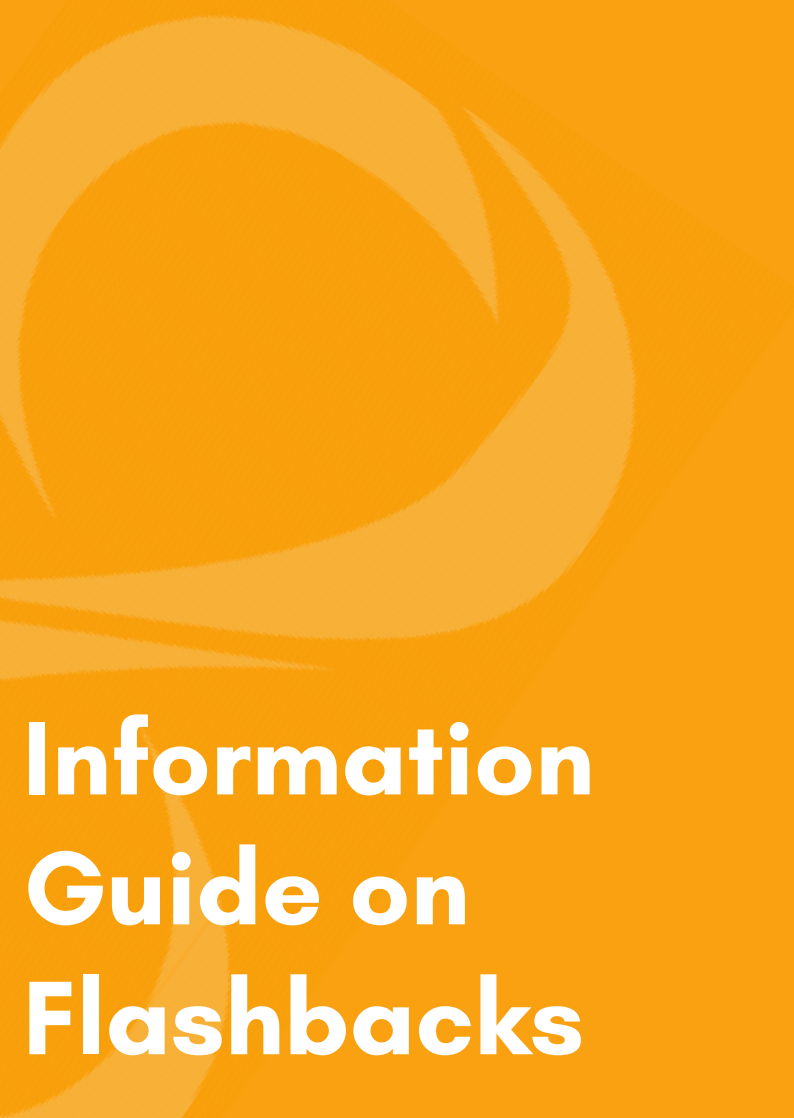




Information Guide on Flashbacks

What is a flashback?

Flashbacks are active memories of a traumatic event and they can make you feel as though the trauma you experienced is happening all over again.

Flashbacks can take many forms:

Visual Memories: Images, three dimensional technicolour images, black and white, foggy or clear.

Auditory Memories: Sounds like music, breathing, doors shutting, footsteps.

Emotional Memories: Feelings of distress, hopelessness, rage, terror, dread, danger or a complete lack of feelings (numbness).

Body Memories: Physical sensations including pain, nausea, gagging sensation, difficulty swallowing, feeling restricted, difficulty breathing.

Sensory Memories: Experiences such as particular smells or tastes.

Why do they happen?

Part of the brain, called the hippocampus is the part that focuses on memory. If someone experiences something traumatic:

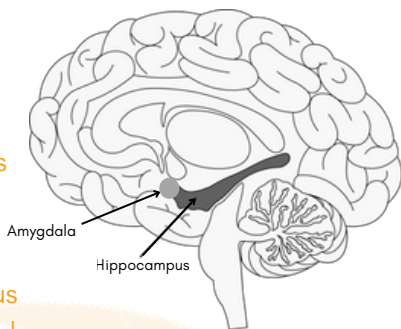
A part of the brain called the amygdala takes over.



The amygdala becomes heightened and pulls all its resources to it.



Therefore, the hippocampus does not work correctly and does not store the memory as it should.



So, when flashbacks occur, this is the brains way of remembering the details of what happened.

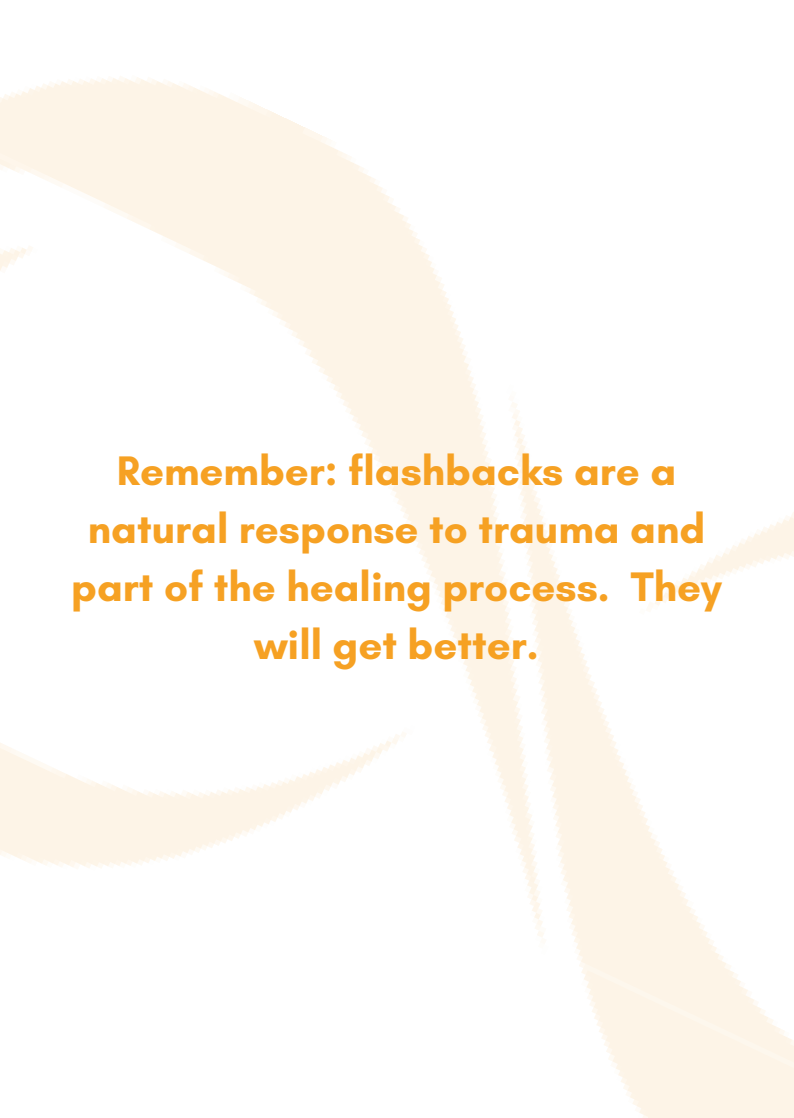
Anything can trigger a flashback to occur, such as: a smell, a colour, a sound, a feeling of a particular object or even a piece of clothing.

- Take care of your breathing: Take deep breaths. You can also count – to 5 – as you breathe. Breathing slowly and deeply can stop the panic.



- Get support if you would like it: Let people close to you know about flashbacks so they can help you if you want them to.
- Flashbacks are powerful experiences which drain your energy. Take time to look after yourself when you have had a flashback.
- When you feel ready, write down all you can remember about the flashback and how you got through it. This can help the healing process and can remind you that you did get through it (and will again).





Remember: flashbacks are a natural response to trauma and part of the healing process. They will get better.

Further help and support

RASAC provides further information via our website and helpline service which can be contacted via calling, email and webchat | 0300 303 4787 | www.rasac.co.uk | helpline@rasac.co.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales | 0808 500 2222 | 24/7 Support line | www.rapecrisis.org.uk | Live chat via their website

MIND is a mental health helpline | 0300 123 3393 (9am – 6pm, Monday – Friday (except for bank holidays) | www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/

Young Minds provides support for adults to help them support young people's mental health | 0808 802 5544 | (9.30am – 4pm, Monday – Friday) | www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield

PO Box 230
Huddersfield
HD1 5UY

Helpline: 0300 303 4787

Websites: www.rasac.co.uk

Email: helpline@rasac.co.uk

