Acute Stress Disorder is caused by trauma (traumatic stress) and lasts at least 3 days following a traumatic event.

Some symptoms can include:

✓ Involuntary and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event.
✓ Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or affect of the dream are related to the events
✓ Intense physical and emotional reactions when reminded of the event
✓ Feeling or acting as if the event is reoccurring
✓ Difficulty feeling positive emotions
✓ Feeling dazed or as if viewing yourself from another’s perspective
✓ Sleep disturbance
✓ Irritable behavior
✓ Hypervigilance or exaggerated startle response
✓ Problems with concentration

As scary and overwhelming as these feelings can be, these symptoms are considered to be within the normal range of reactions given the extreme severity of the stressor. The symptoms usually appear within hours to days of the impact of the stressful stimulus or event, and typically begin to subside within a week after the event.
Why Do I Feel This Way??
Acute Stress Disorder in the Face of Traumatic Experiences:
Understanding and Coping

Helpful Ways to Cope with Acute Stress

Physical Activity: Acute stress releases a great deal of adrenaline and triggers your “fight or flight” response. Physical activity will metabolize these hormones helping you become calmer. Ex.) Brisk walking, dancing, or an activity from Darebee.com

Clarifying Information about the Event: As able discussing with friends and faculty/staff the evolving situation to stay informed and reduce catastrophic thinking.

Time with Friends and Loved Ones: Spending time and sharing support, empathy, and connections with those who are also affected. This is the time to rally within your community for one another.


Using Five Senses to Soothe: Taking a hot shower or bath, listening to a favorite music composer or artist, looking at beautiful works of art or photos, smelling your favorite scents such as lavender, allowing yourself to indulge in a favorite food or dessert.

Protect Your Sleep Hygiene: Sleep helps heal your brain from the stress. Trying to keep a consistent schedule, avoid screen time right before bed, and only use your bed for sleeping. All of these can help train your brain for a more restful sleep.

Avoid Alcohol or Other Substances: While in the immediate these can reduce your emotional discomfort it causes a “rebound” effect. Once your body metabolizes the substance the initial emotions will return with increased intensity.