

## **Tab 2** Steps to Recovery

One way to feel more in control after a sexual assault is to make your own decisions about what feels comfortable at each stage of your recovery.

You may want to consider making choices about the following:

**Everyday routines** – Some routines provide structure in a difficult time. Others find it more helpful to cut back on some activities and take things a little slower for a while.

**Reporting option** – As mentioned previously, the service member has two options regarding reporting. In order to preserve the right to choose what kind of a report is made, the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator for your installation must be contacted.

**Medical care** – A health care provider can treat medical conditions that may have resulted from the assault. It is also important to be tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Women may want to be tested for pregnancy. In addition, a sexual assault forensic examination can provide important evidence that can be used if charges are brought against the attacker. This kind of exam may not always be necessary, but it is an important consideration if you intend to portico-pate in the investigation and court proceedings.

**Mental health care** - Research studies show that people usually have better and quicker recoveries when they seek counseling. Most treat-mints are solution focused and can speed improvement in coping. Counseling may reduce the risk of developing PTSD or another health condition after an assault. Support groups are also an option.

**Legal action** - Some people have a strong desire to avoid the loss of privacy involved with facing an attacker in court. Others find that participating in the investigation and subsequent legal action helps them recover because prosecution may keep the perpetrator from hurting others. The Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and/or Victim Advocate can assist in this process by providing guidance and resources.

## 5 Steps to Recovery

Every person reacts differently to sexual assault. There are five stages of recovery, which most victims will experience to some degree. It is not unusual for different people to experience the stages in different orders or even to repeat stages several times. They are:

1. INITIAL SHOCK - Shock following an assault can take on many forms. Victims may experience emotional as well as physical shock, which in turn could be expressed as very controlled, and/or withdrawn, or highly expressive, including crying, screaming or shaking. Victims may or may not feel comfortable communicating these feelings to others.

2. DENIAL - This stage may find victims attempting to go on a normal routine and wanting to forget about the assault. This denial or rationalization of what happened is an attempt to deal with inner turmoil.

3. REACTIVATION - This stage involves a re-experiencing of the feelings from Stage 1, usually brought on by the triggering of memories of the assault. Feelings of depression, anxiety and shame increase. Other symptoms can include nightmares, flashbacks, and a sense of vulnerability, mistrust and physical complaints.

4. ANGER - Victims may experience feelings of anger—often towards themselves, friends, significant others, society, the legal system, all men/women, etc. Sometimes through counseling this anger can be dispelled.

5. INTEGRATION (Closure) - As victims integrate the thoughts and feelings stemming from the assault into their life experience victims will begin to feel “back on track”. As a result of support, education and the passage of time, victims may feel strengthened. Sexual Assault is a crime that has a zero tolerance in the military. It is important to know what to do if you or someone you know is assaulted. No victim will be left alone or behind, we are here to help

