

## After a Critical Incident

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The First 24 Hours After an Event:

- Periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reaction.
- Structure your time - keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reaction - don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people - talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with over use of drugs or alcohol, you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out - people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through the sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- **Don't make any big life changes or decisions.**
- Do make as many daily decision as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life. If some one asks you what you want to eat-answer them even if you're not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

## For Family Members & Friends

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- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, and minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - that statement does not console traumatized people. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred, and you want to understand and assist them.

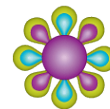
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We recommend that these incidents should be an "AUTOMATIC CALL OUT." This means that the critical incident response team should always be contacted for each of these events:

1. Line of duty death
2. Serious line of duty injury
3. Suicide of a co-worker
4. Multi-casualty incident
5. Police shooting, that ends with injury or death

These are incidents for which you should consider contacting the critical incident response team to elicit recommendations for intervention:

1. Death or violence to a child
2. A prolonged event, with negative results
3. Incident with extensive media attention
4. Knowing the victim of the event
5. Incident charged with profound emotion



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## Informational Sheet

**A volunteer team of public safety and affiliate professionals serving regional fire, EMS, and law enforcement, industry, educational, and other organizations involved in any type of critical incident.**

Confidential services provided at no charge:

Pre-Incident Stress Education  
Individual Peer Support  
Crisis Management Briefing  
Defusing  
Debriefing  
Follow-Up  
Referral

To Request Service/Response:

**1-800-567-4673**

For Information Contact:

[allencountycism@gmail.com](mailto:allencountycism@gmail.com)  
[wocism@gmail.com](mailto:wocism@gmail.com)

# Critical Incident Stress Informational Sheet

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You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes each person or persons to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing, or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reaction(s). It is very common, in fact quite **normal**, for people to experience emotional after shocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or occasionally longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by himself or herself.

## Common Signs of Stress

Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>
Fatigue	Confusion
Nausea	Poor attention
Muscle tremors	Poor decisions
Twitches	Heightened/Lowered alertness
Chest pain*	
Difficulty breathing*	Problems w/hyper vigilance
Elevated B/P	Difficulty recognizing familiar things
Headache	Poor problem solving
Thirst	Poor abstract thinking
Profuse sweating	Nightmares
Chills	Loss of orientation—time, place, person
Shock symptoms*	Intrusive images
Vomiting	
Weakness	
Grinding teeth	
Visual difficulties	
Dizziness	

## Common Signs of Stress

Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>
Anxiety	Changes in society
Guilt	Changes in speech patterns
Grief	Loss/Increase appetite
Denial	Withdrawal
Severe panic	Emotional outburst
Emotional Shock	Pacing
Fear	Startle reflex
Uncertainty	Alcohol Consumption
Agitation	Inability to rest
Intense anger	Changes in sexual function
Apprehension	Erratic acts
Loss of emotional control or depression	Antisocial behavior
Feeling overwhelmed	Non-specific bodily complaints
Inappropriate emotional response	Changes in communication skills

\* = Seek immediate medical attention