

Critical Incident Stress

People who experience a critical incident are impacted by the event in some way. Psychological reactions to critical incidents are usually normal reactions by normal people to abnormal events. It is also normal to have NO reaction or a severely delayed reaction to a critical event.

Critical incident stress reactions usually diminish in severity over time for MOST people but can become more severe as time passes. When stress responses become a problem or are distressing for you or your family, a consultation with a mental health professional can be helpful. The list below describes some of the normal reactions people have following critical incidents.

NORMAL REACTIONS		
Anger	Anxiety	Confusion
Criticism	Decreased Sexual Desire	Denial
Depression	Difficulty Concentrating	Disorientation
Emotional Numbing	Fatigue	Fear
Feeling of Loss	Feelings of Inadequacy	Forgetfulness
Frustration	Grief	Guilt
Headaches	Helplessness	Irritability
Letdown	Loss of Appetite	Excessive Appetite
Memory Problems	Muffled Hearing	Muscle Tremors
Nausea	Nightmares	Persistent Thoughts
Shock	Sleep Disturbances	Stomach Cramps
Sweating	Visual Flashbacks	Withdrawal
Increased Drug or Alcohol Use	Intense Concern About Family Members	Sense of Unreality or "Being in a Movie"
Anger at Supervisor or Organization	Difficulty Making Decisions	Feelings of Being Ignored or Unappreciated
Time Distortion	Sense of Being in a Bad Dream	Persistent Interest in the Event

Coping With Critical Incident Stress

People can take steps to help themselves, family members, co-workers, and each other cope with critical incident related stress reactions. This is a list of self-help suggestions:

1. Within the first 24-72 hours, periods of strenuous exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions to a stressful situation.
2. Structure your time...KEEP BUSY.
3. Remind yourself that you are a normal person experiencing normal reactions. Don't label yourself "crazy", "weak" or question your ability to function normally.
4. Talk is one of the most healing medications, talk to people you know who care about you. PEOPLE DO CARE.
5. Keep your life as normal as possible. Even if you don't feel like doing things you normally do such as exercise or spiritual practices, do them anyway.
6. It is all right to spend time by yourself.
7. Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
8. Do things that usually make you feel good.
9. Realize that those around you are also under stress and may not act or react in a manner you would normally expect.
10. Keep a journal, write if you can't sleep.
11. Don't make a big life decision, buy a new car, a new home, end or start a relationship during a period of stress reaction.
12. If symptoms and reactions persist beyond a short time, DO NOT JUDGE YOURSELF, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

We Can Help...Call The Allen Group: www.theallengroup.com

800-272-7252

TDD 888-833-2017

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