CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a traumatic event (an injury, loss of a friend, co-worker, loved one, or property, a serious threat, or an overwhelming emotional experience). Although the event may be completed, you may now be experiencing or may experience later some strong cognitive (thoughts), emotional, or physical responses. It is very common, in fact quite NORMAL, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event. Sometimes these aftershocks or STRESS RESPONSES appear immediately after the event (ACUTE). At times these responses may appear a few hours, few days, weeks, or months later (DELAYED). You may have experienced other traumatic events recently or in the past (CUMULATIVE). The signs and symptoms of a stress response may last a few days, weeks, or months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support of loved ones, the stress responses usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor trained in Critical Incident Stress Management may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular traumatic event was just too painful to manage alone.

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| **PHYSICAL** | **THINKING** | **EMOTIONAL** |
| **1. Chest Pain (See a Doctor)** | **1. Confusion** | **1. Anger** |
| **2. Chills** | **2. Difficulty Concentrating** | **2. Anxiety** |
| **3. Irritable Bowel Syndrome** | **3. Difficulty forming words Verbal acuity** | **3. Depression** |
| **4. Dizziness** | **4. Difficulty making decisions** | **4. Fear** |
| **5. Fatigue** | **5. Difficulty problem solving** | **5. Feeling abandoned** |
| **6. Feeling uncoordinated** | **6. Difficulty naming common objects** | **6. Feeling isolated** |
| **7. Headaches** | **7. Disorientation to place and time** | **7. Feeling lost** |
| **8. Increased blood pressure** | **8. Feeling numb** | **8. Distressing dreams** |
| **9. Muscle aches** | **9. Flashbacks** | **9. Grief** |
| **10. Nausea** | **10. Memory problems** | **10. Guilt** |
| **11. Profuse sweating** | **11. Poor attention span** | **11. Irritability** |
| **12. Rapid breathing** | **12. Problem with number calculations** | **12. Sadness** |
| **13. Rapid heart beat** | **13. Seeing the event over and over again** | **13. Shocked** |
| **14. Sleep disturbances** | **14. Slowed thinking** | **14. Startled** |
| **15. Tremors (lips, hands)** | **15. Difficulty learning** | **15. Wanting to hide** |
| **16. Upset stomach** | **16. Difficulty putting thoughts on paper** | **16. Repressed anger/ sadness** |
| **17. Onset of illness** | **17. Reoccurring thoughts** | **17. Withdrawal** |
| **18. Kinetic sensations** | **18. Sights, sounds, smells** | **18. Dissociation** |

Helpful Hints in Dealing with a Critical Incident

Implementing the following suggestions may help to alleviate the stress responses associated with a traumatic event.

**For Yourself**

1. Try to rest more.
2. Eat vegetables and protein.
3. Drink lots of water.
4. Contact friends and have someone stay with you for a few hours or a day or so.
5. Maintain a normal schedule and then get back to your regular schedule.
6. Reoccurring thoughts, dreams, and flashbacks are NORMAL. Do NOT try and fight them. They will decrease over time and become less painful.
7. Exercise (walk, lift weights, swim etc.).
8. Express your feelings as they arise. Switch negative thoughts to positive thoughts. Explore and make positive behavioral choices.
9. Talk to people who you love and trust.
10. Find a counselor trained in Stress Management if the feelings are prolonged or too intense.

**For Your Family and Friends**

* 1. LISTEN carefully.
  2. Spend time with your loved one.
  3. Do NOT take their anger or irritability or other feelings personally.
  4. Reassure them that they are safe.
  5. Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help.
  6. Help them with everyday tasks e.g. caring for the family or minding their kids for a while.
  7. Give them some private time.
  8. Do NOT tell them that they are lucky it was not worse…People are not consoled by these statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.
  9. Make sure they are eating a well-balanced meal and exercising. Suggest taking a walk together.
  10. When the time presents itself and only when it is appropriate, expose them to something fun that will promote laughter. Laughter is very helpful in stabilizing a traumatized person (remember only when appropriate). If the symptoms described on the previous page are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, the traumatized person may need professional counseling.