

Dedicated to Serving Those Who Serve

What is Critical Incident Stress?

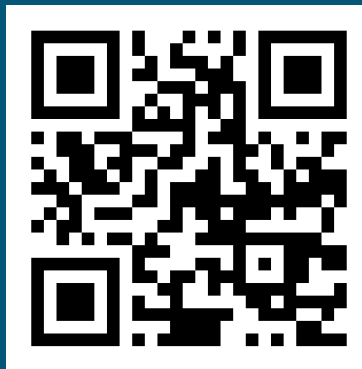
A traumatic event or critical incident causes unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing, or may experience later, strong emotional and physical reactions. It is very common, and in fact quite normal, for people to feel emotional aftershocks when they have experienced a tragic event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately, they may appear hours or days later, or in some cases it may be weeks or months until stress reactions appear.

The understanding and support of peers and loved ones help the stress reactions to pass more quickly. At other times, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be needed. This does not imply weakness. It simply means that the event is too powerful for you to manage by yourself.

800-222-9691

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This pamphlet is provided as a support resource and is not intended to replace recommendations from a physician or licensed mental health professional. Dial 911 for life threatening events.

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Dealing with Child Deaths



Impact of a Child's Death

What makes it hard?

Factors that make the death of a child more difficult.

- Having your own child, or knowing a child that is the same age as the victim
- Knowing the victim or aspects of the victim's life (i.e. school, neighborhood)
- Being in a similar stage in your life with your family (i.e. responding to a drowning while you have a pool and young children at home)
- Having a similar background as the victim
- Having something in common with someone at the scene
- Having the death remind you of another loss or past experience
- Feeling as though you could have done more to save the child's life



How do we cope with this type of situation?

How can you stay resilient?

Healthy coping skills for public safety professionals.

In order to maintain resiliency, you need to have a variety of healthy coping skills. Every child death is different and individuals deal with it differently. There is no perfect way to deal with the death of a child but there are ways to decrease your risk of negative coping.

Healthy coping skills can include:

- Tactical breathing
- Relaxation techniques
- Talking with peers, family, friends, chaplain, therapist or a member of your peer support team
- Ask for a debriefing
- Call your spouse and/or check on your children
- Take time for exercise or do something you enjoy

Reactions to Avoid

Now What?

Things that public safety professionals should avoid.

Dealing with the death of a child at any point in life is never easy. It is made more difficult when the responder feels powerless or feels they were not given a chance to use their skills to save the child's life. Responding to the death of a child can also become increasingly difficult when the "would have, could have, should have" thinking pattern arises.

The following should be avoided:

- Pretending the call did not affect you if it did
- Drinking alcohol for the first few days following the death
- Isolating from family, friends and peers
- Watching the news or spending too much time on social media

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Call TCTI to learn more about scheduling an appointment with a clinician.