

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 you are human and need support in processing what you experienced.

800-222-9691

thecounselingteam.com



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Dial 911 for life threatening events.*

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v1.2024

Reactions and Experiences with Trauma

*What to expect and how to heal
after a traumatic event.*



What to Expect



Stress Reactions



Keep Going

Stages of trauma response:

1. Initial shock
2. Disruption of normal activities and behavior
3. Integration of the trauma
4. Return to "normal"

Possible symptoms you may experience after a traumatic event:

- Desire to be alone or a fear of being alone
- Feeling detached or clinging others
- Hypersensitivity or jumpiness
- Inability to sleep, eat, relax, or concentrate
- Increased anxiety or fear
- Irritability, short temper, or feelings of rage
- Nightmares
- Paranoid thoughts
- Unusual behavior

These are normal reactions to a traumatic event and will usually fade within a week or two.

If you have experienced a traumatic event:

- Avoid using alcohol or drugs to cope
- Realize that what you are experiencing is normal and will be temporary
- Talk about your reactions with coworkers, supervisors, friends, and family

If you are helping someone:

- Offer assistance and provide a listening ear
- Use the resources that are offered
- Encourage them to reach out for assistance
- Be available for anyone who was involved in the traumatic situation, regardless if they do / do not want assistance

Physical

- Chest pain
- Chills
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty seeing
- Dizziness
- Elevated blood pressure
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Insomnia/nightmares
- Muscle tremors
- Nausea/vomiting
- Profuse sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Teeth grinding
- Thirst
- Twitches
- Weakness

Cognitive

- Blaming others
- Confusion
- Unaware of surroundings
- Disorientation of time
- Hypervigilance
- Intrusive images
- Poor abstract thinking
- Poor concentration
- Poor decision making
- Poor problem solving
- Suspicious of others
- Uncertainty

Emotional

- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Apprehension
- Depression
- Emotional outbursts
- Emotional shock
- Fear
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Frustration
- Grief
- Guilt
- Intense anger
- Irritability
- Inappropriate emotional response
- Panic denial

Behavioral

- Alcohol or substance use
- Antisocial acts
- Appetite change
- Changes in social life
- Changes in speech
- Erratic movements
- Increased startle reflex
- Inability to rest
- Increased alcohol or substance usage
- Intense pacing
- Withdrawing

Your reactions are normal. Here's what you can do as you keep going:

- Don't label your feelings crazy, they are normal.
- Reach out to people you trust and talk to them - they care about you.
- Spend time with others.
- Be aware of numbing your pain with drugs or alcohol.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals, even if you don't feel like it.
- Within the first 24-48 hours, physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Help your co-workers by checking in on them.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with those you trust.
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that make you happy.
- Don't make any big life decisions or changes.
- Make small, daily decisions that will give you a feeling of control over your life (i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat, answer them even if you're not sure).
- Don't try to fight reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks - they are normal and will decrease overtime, becoming less painful.
- Structure your time; keep busy and productive.



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

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