

## WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

### Perceptual Distortions

- Time – slow motion, fast motion
- Auditory – diminished sound, intensified sound
- Visual – tunnel vision, heightened sense of detail

### Shock and Disruption:

- Initial denial
- Auto pilot
- Difficulty remembering
- Heightened sensitivity

### Emotional Numbing:

- May be in shock
- Keeps from feeling pain
- Must succeed at job
- Peer pressure

### Hostility and Anger:

- Non-directed
- Short fused with others
- Can cause relationship discord
- Can cause performance problems

### Guilt:

- Did not perform on duty
- Survives event while another officer did not
- May overcompensate in an unnecessary risk
- Second guesses actions

### Isolation:

- No one cares
- No one understands

### Depression:

- Sleep difficulties
- Loss of interest

### Physical Reactions:

- Headaches / dizzy spells
- Tremors
- Heartburn
- Chest Pains
- Constipation
- High blood pressure

## Dedicated to Serving Those Who Serve

800-222-9691

[thecounselingteam.com](http://thecounselingteam.com)



*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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## Officer Involved Shootings (OIS)



## 20 SIGNALS THAT SAY “I’M STUCK”

Some people may find themselves reliving the impact of an officer involved shooting. An individual should seek professional consultation if the following reactions persist longer than a month at a level that interferes with the ability to function.

- Intrusive images: distressing memories, thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks
- Distress at exposure to events that resemble or symbolize the event
- Avoids thoughts and emotions connected with the incident, or activities or situations that arouse memories of the trauma
- Numbing or restricted range of emotional responsiveness
- Excessive stress reactions
- Hypervigilance
- Overreaction / under-reaction / risk-taking
- Increased irritability, anger, or rage
- Obsession with the incident – thoughts of the incident are easily triggered or one seems stuck in the past and has difficulty looking towards the future
- The current incident can trigger feelings associated with past events. The combined emotional impact of old and new situations may seem so overwhelming that one’s ability to deal effectively with any incident seems to suffer
- Self-doubt, guilt, second guessing of oneself, feelings of inadequacy, obsession with perceived mistakes
- A growing sense of isolation: “No one understands what I’m experiencing...I feel lost, abandoned, and different than others.”
- Intense or sustained feelings of depression, grief, or loss of control
- Mental confusion, increased distractibility, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, poor judgment



- Development of suspiciousness dealing with others
- Relationship problems – withdrawal from others, family problems, increasing difficulty with peer / supervisory / family relationships
- Decline in work performance – increased absenteeism, burnout, and decline in productivity and quality of work
- One may have little or no noticeable initial reaction to the incident, but reactions could be triggered months later
- Self-destructive behavior – substance abuse, poor judgment, and inappropriate decisions
- Rarely, suicidal thinking may result from feelings of depression, guilt, despair, and anger at oneself
- When a person experiences an officer involved shooting, current behavior may change substantially from previous normal behavior

## OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Who is subject to critical incident stress?

- The officer who was shot
- The officer who was injured
- The officer who did not shoot
- The officer who was on the way to the scene
- The officer who arrived at the scene
- Dispatchers
- Investigators
- Supervisors
- Family members and department members

The Reality:

Officers experiences many different and deep emotional responses, as all humans do, to a highly stressful, life-threatening situation.

## COPING STRATEGIES

- Adaptive Attitude: How we deal with an event is more important than the event itself. Life events don’t make us feel the way we do, it’s the view we take of them. Whatever you are trying to avoid will not go away until you confront it. What you cannot communicate can negatively impact you.
- Normal Reactions: Your emotions are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Talk It Out: Talking about your emotions helps let them go, reduces emotional intensity, and helps you define and clarify what you feel. As you talk, you tend to feel more control over your emotions.
- Coping with Anger: The first step is to acknowledge that you are angry. Then probe your anger: angry at whom, at what, and how come? Discover what is underneath your anger, vulnerability, fear, etc. Identify what you are doing with your anger, what is it doing to (and for) you?
- Responsibility Guilt: We all want to believe we are in control of situations as they arise. So if something goes wrong: “It must be my fault”. Taking responsibility for what happened may be a way to avoid facing the vulnerability that comes with the realization that events were beyond your control. You can’t always control what’s happening, but you CAN control your response.
- Second Guessing: Acknowledge and understand your perceptions before and during the incident that led to your actions. Knowing what was going on in your mind at the time will help you understand why you did what you did, differentiate what was and what wasn’t under your control, and differentiate what you knew at the time and what was impossible to know.
- Dealing with Fear and Vulnerability: You may experience fear which confronts your sense of vulnerability. Fear is an automatic response to the perception of danger and is NOT a sign of weakness.

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