

Critical Incident Stress Management

Educational Information Concerning Critical Incidents

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident which is defined as any incident that causes emergency service personnel to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability at the scene or later. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event.

Physical *	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
Chills Thirst Fatigue Nausea Fainting Twitches Vomiting Dizziness Weakness Chest Pain Headaches Elevated BP Rapid Heart Rate Muscle Tremors Shock Symptoms Grinding of Teeth Visual Difficulties Profuse Sweating Difficulty Breathing, Etc	Confusion Nightmares Uncertainty Hypervigilance Suspiciousness Intrusive images Blaming someone Poor problem solving Poor abstract thinking Poor attention /decisions Poor concentration/memory Disorientation of time, place or person Difficulty identifying objects or people Heightened or lowered alertness Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings Etc.	Fear Guilt Grief Panic Denial Anxiety Agitation Irritability Depression Intense anger Apprehension Emotional shock Emotional outbursts Feeling overwhelmed Loss of emotional control Inappropriate emotional response Etc.	Withdrawal Antisocial acts Inability to rest Intensified pacing Erratic movements Change in social activity Change in speech patterns Loss or increase of appetite Hyperalter to environment Increase alcohol consumption Change in usual communications Etc.

**Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation. When in doubt, contact a physician.*