Critical Incident Stress Information

You have experienced a traumatic event or a “Critical Incident” (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally). Even thought 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 or troubling event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

 Signs and Symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event, or by how close to home it hits us. The understanding and the support of loved ones usually causes the stress reactions to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage alone.

Below is a listing of some of the signs and symptoms a person may go through. Some of these may be more serious than others, if this is the case, please consider professional help as soon as possible.



**Some Things to Try:** Over the next few days it’s important to use healthy coping mechanisms to help you deal with the stress this event has caused, even if you don’t think your affected much.

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 - 48 HOURS periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions. 2. Structure your time - keep busy. 3. You're normal and having normal reactions - don't label yourself crazy. 4. Talk to people - talk is the most healing medicine. 5. Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem. 6. Reach out - people do care. 7. Maintain as normal a schedule as possible. 8. Spend time with others. 9. Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing. 10. Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others. 11. Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours. 12. Do things that feel good to you. 13. Realize those around you are also under stress. 14. Don't make any big life changes. 15. Do make as many daily decisions as possible which 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. 16. Get plenty of rest. 17. Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they'll decrease over time and become less painful. 18. Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

**For Family members and Friends**

19. Listen carefully. 20. Spend time with the traumatized person, ask if they want a back/neck massage. 21. Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help. 22. Reassure them that they are safe. 23. Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children. 24. Give them some private time. 25. Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. 26. Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred, and you want to understand and assist them.

**Resources**

After a critical incident you may need other resources to help you recover, these may include: #211 help line. 211 is a helpline connecting people to social services support 24/7 #988 National Suicide Hotline Canada Suicide prevention 1-833-456-4566 (in Quebec 1-866-277-3553) Wellness Together Canada 1-866-585-0445 or text WELLNESS to 741741 wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca