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.

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| **Physical** \* | **Cognitive** | **Emotional** | **Behavioral** |
| ChillsThirstFatigueNauseaFaintingTwitchesVomitingDizzinessWeaknessChest PainHeadachesElevated BPRapid Heart RateMuscle TremorsShock SymptomsGrinding of TeethVisual DifficultiesProfuse SweatingDifficulty Breathing, Etc | ConfusionNightmaresUncertainty HypervigilanceSuspiciousnessIntrusive imagesBlaming someonePoor problem solvingPoor abstract thinkingPoor attention /decisionsPoor concentration/memoryDisorientation of time, place or personDifficulty identifying objects or peopleHeightened or lowered alertnessIncreased or decreased awareness of surroundingsEtc. | FearGuiltGriefPanicDenialAnxietyAgitationIrritabilityDepressionIntense angerApprehensionEmotional shockEmotional outburstsFeeling overwhelmedLoss of emotional controlInappropriate emotional responseEtc. | WithdrawalAntisocial actsInability to restIntensified pacingErratic movementsChange in social activityChange in speech patternsLoss or increase of appetiteHyperalter to environment Increase alcohol consumptionChange in usual communicationsEtc. |

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

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