

## Reducing the effects of critical incident stress

You may have already tried to define what works best for you after a critical or traumatic incident. Everyone copes in different ways, and whatever works for you is fine.

Here are a few further techniques you can do which can help reduce the effects of any stress you may experience soon after the event - none of them are 'shoulds' (as 'shoulds' only give you another job to do!).

- ✿ Try not to be hard on yourself for what you are going through.
- ✿ Know that life isn't always fair.
- ✿ Contact your friends.
- ✿ Treat yourself to whatever you find enjoyable.
- ✿ Physical activity is often helpful.
- ✿ Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- ✿ Eat well balanced and regular meals.
- ✿ Don't make any significant life decisions or changes - if you can avoid them.
- ✿ Spend time with others, but take time out to rest and relax too.
- ✿ Do things that make you feel good - you deserve it!
- ✿ Talk to people about your experience.
- ✿ Give yourself permission to feel 'rotten' for a while.
- ✿ Recurring thoughts and memories are normal and they will fade over time - the experience has been significant to you.
- ✿ Don't overdo alcohol or other drugs.

## When to seek further assistance

- if** you feel you cannot handle the intensity of feelings or reactions you are experiencing right now
- if** your normal ways of coping are not working for you
- if** you do not seem to be getting 'back to normal' as soon as you would expect
- if** there is no one you can talk to about how you are feeling
- if** your work performance or home life is suffering.

## Where to find help

Further assistance is available to you and your immediate family members. The type of assistance to seek will depend on who you feel most comfortable with and who can best assist you.

Call TRIUMPH – Human Response to Crisis to discuss your needs and help you to identify the best possible support.



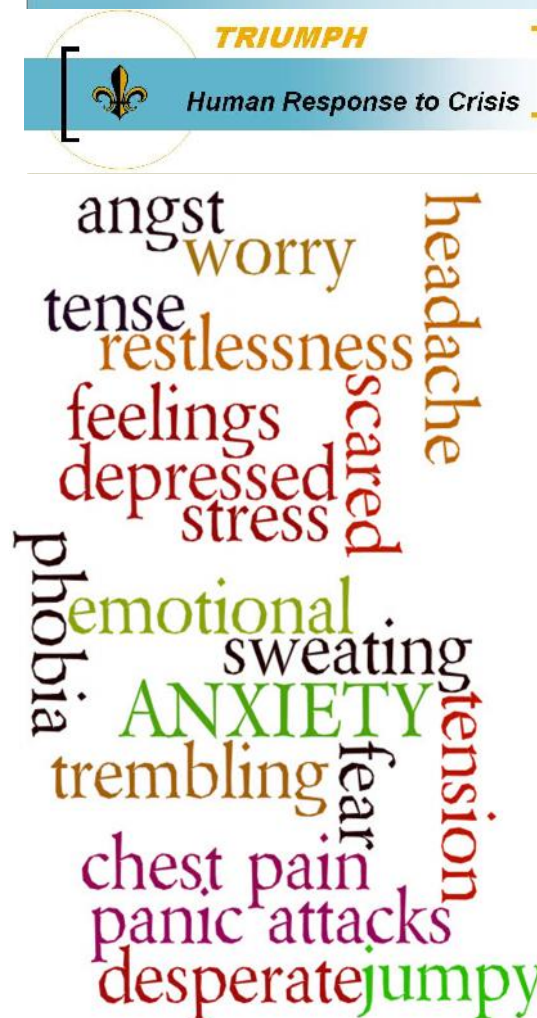
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## Coping with the effects of

# Critical Incident Stress





## About this brochure

People can often find themselves involved in traumatic incidents that lead to a range of feelings and reactions, both good and bad.

This brochure has been designed to help you understand some of the more common reactions people have experienced in similar situations, and to explain how you can seek help and support.

## Coping with Critical Incident Stress

If you have recently been involved in a traumatic incident, you may be experiencing a range of both positive and negative feelings and reactions.

These situations can often result in positive reactions. You may have helped someone to survive, or coped in a situation that would 'test the best' - achievements that can leave you feeling exhilarated and personally satisfied.

However some incidents place extreme pressure on your coping skills, leading you to experience negative emotions and reactions.

*Remember that although you may have the skills to deal with traumatic incidents, you are still a human being who will react normally to these types of events.*

## Feelings and reactions you may experience

### Fear

- ... for your own safety and those you care about
- ... of being left alone or leaving loved ones
- ... of breaking down or losing control
- ... of a similar event happening again
- ... just plain fear

### Sadness

- ... for the deaths, injuries, losses

### Guilt

- ... for things done and said
- ... for things not done or said
- ... for being better off than others

### Anger

- ... at what has happened
- ... at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen
- ... at the waste of life
- ... at the senselessness of it all
- ... with people who don't understand
- ... about why this is happening to you
- ... with yourself for feeling this way

### Memories

- ... of what has happened
- ... of other traumas and losses in your life

You may also experience some physical reactions, such as:

- ✿ sleep disturbance or bad dreams
- ✿ seeing the event over and over
- ✿ being irritable or 'jumpy'
- ✿ difficulty concentrating
- ✿ feeling down or 'flat'
- ✿ nausea or an upset stomach
- ✿ muscle tension, which can lead to headaches and other physical aches and pains.

You may be confused or worried by some of the physical and emotional reactions you are experiencing. Although these reactions can be distressing and cause you discomfort, they are part of a normal stress reaction to a traumatic event.

## Relationships

While traumatic experiences can bring people closer together, they can also result in strains and tensions amongst workmates, partners, family or friends.

You may find it difficult to talk about what you have been through, or may feel that you don't want to 'burden' others with your problems. You could also feel that the people around you are not as understanding as you would like them to be, and changes in your behaviour may worry or annoy them. Again, these are normal stress reactions after a traumatic event.