

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS REACTIONS **INFORMATION SHEET**

You may have experienced a critical incident, an extraordinary, traumatic event that has temporarily overwhelmed you mentally, physically, and/or emotionally.

Even though the event may be over and completed, you may now be experiencing or may later experience emotional aftershocks when they have in some way witnessed or responded to a critical incident. Sometimes the reactions to critical incidents appear immediately during or after the critical incident. Sometimes they appear a few hours or a few days later, in some cases, weeks or months pass before such stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of critical incident stress may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the critical incident. With understanding and support from others, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the experience of the critical incident is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not mean you are crazy or weak. It simply means that the particular traumatic event was just too powerful for someone to manage at this time in his or her life.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS REACTIONS

EMOTIONAL

Anxiety
Frustration
Mood swings
Bad temper
Nightmares
Crying spells
Irritability
"No one cares"
Depression
Nervous laugh
Little joy
Feeling unappreciated
Worrying about others
Wanting to limit contact with others
Feeling numb
Easily startled

RELATIONAL

Isolation
Intolerance
Resentment
Loneliness
Lashing out
Hiding
Clamming up
Low sex drive
Distrust
Lack of intimacy

MENTAL

Forgetfulness
Dull senses
Poor concentration
Low productivity
Negative attitude
Confusion
Lethargy
Whirling mind
No new ideas
Boredom
Spacing out
Negative self-talk
Difficulty making decisions
Disorientation (time & place)
Memory problems
Repeated visions of incident
Distressing dreams
Poor attention span

SPIRITUAL

Emptiness
Loss of meaning
Doubt
Unforgiving
Martyrdom
Looking for magic
Loss of direction
Needing to prove self
Cynicism
Apathy

PHYSICAL

Appetite change
Headaches
Tension
Fatigue
Insomnia
Weight change
Colds
Muscle aches
Pounding heart
Teeth grinding
Restlessness
Feeling uncoordinated
Sleep disturbances
Decrease in sexual interest and activity

Things to try...

Physical exercise
Relaxation
Eat well
Structure your time
Talk to people
Reach out
Maintain a normal schedule
Ensure plenty of rest
Give yourself permission to feel bad
Do things that feel good to you
Do not make any big life decisions
Stay away from alcohol and or drugs