



Suggested Strategies for Post Deployment Self Help

Welcome home from your mission to serve the survivors and responders in Haiti. In an effort to ease the transition home and to promote health and wellness, the ICISF would like to remind you of a few pointers that others have found helpful following a prolonged deployment.

First and foremost, please remember that it is normal to notice a few of the common stress reactions listed below. Many stress reactions will resolve by themselves with support and good stress management practices. When these reactions persist, there is help available to keep the distress from increasing. Please reach out if you are concerned about yourself or others from the deployment.

Common stress reactions that may result from disaster experiences may include:

- Emotional reactions: temporary (i.e., for several days or a couple of weeks) feelings of shock, fear, grief, anger, resentment, guilt, shame, helplessness, hopelessness, or emotional numbness (difficulty feeling love and intimacy or difficulty taking interest and pleasure in day-to-day activities)
- Cognitive reactions: confusion, disorientation, indecisiveness, worry, shortened attention span, difficulty concentrating, memory loss, unwanted memories, self-blame
- Physical reactions: tension, fatigue, edginess, difficulty sleeping, bodily aches or pain, startling easily, racing heartbeat, nausea, change in appetite, change in sex drive
- Interpersonal reactions in relationships at school, work, in friendships, in marriage, or as a parent: distrust; irritability; conflict; withdrawal; isolation; feeling rejected or abandoned; being distant, judgmental, or over-controlling

Below are a few suggestions for managing the natural stress that disaster work may induce:

Post Deployment Stress Control

- Talk about feelings as they arise, and be a good listener to your coworkers.
 - Don't take anger too personally - it's often an expression of frustration, guilt, or worry.
 - Give your coworkers recognition and appreciation for a job well done.
 - Eat well and try to get adequate sleep in the days following the event.
 - Maintain as normal a routine as possible, but take several days to "decompress" gradually
 - Catch up on your rest (this may take several days).
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- Slow down - get back to a normal pace in your daily life.
 - Understand that it's perfectly normal to want to talk about the disaster and equally normal not to want to talk about it; but remember that those who haven't been through it might not be interested in hearing all about it -they might find it frightening or simply be satisfied that you returned safely.
 - Expect disappointment, frustration, and conflict -sometimes coming home doesn't live up to what you imagined it would be -but keep recalling what's really important in your life and relationships so that small stressors don't lead to major conflicts.
 - Don't be surprised if you experience mood swings; they will diminish with time.
 - Don't overwhelm children with your experiences; be sure to talk about what happened in their lives while you were gone.
 - If talking doesn't feel natural, other forms of expression or stress relief such as journal writing, hobbies, and exercise are recommended.

Try to Avoid:

- Excessive use of alcohol to cope with stress
- Isolating yourself from others
- Excessive work to cope with stress
- Ignoring the stress warning signs listed above
- Excessive media coverage of the disaster