



After A Critical Incident

Below are some basic stress management principles that have been shown to help ease or moderate some of the reactions to a critical incident.

- Eat nutritious foods: fresh fruits, vegetables, and a balanced diet.
- Get plenty of physical exercise to reduce some of the physical/psychological effects of stress.
- Moderate your intake of caffeine.
- Avoid alcohol or other depressants.
- Keep rested; remain on a schedule for sleep and other relaxing activities.
- Avoid changes in your daily routine.
- Find a friend or a support source to talk to about the incident.
- Do not make any significant life altering decisions for at least 30 days.
- Try to find time, perhaps just an hour to do something that you enjoy.
- If the symptoms of stress do not lessen, seek additional assistance.

Common Immediate Stress Reactions

Many of those family members exposed to a critical incident may develop noticeable symptoms within 24 hours. Most of these will disappear within three weeks' time. If symptoms worsen, or if they do not begin to dissipate after two weeks, additional intervention is recommended.

- **Tension:** physical and emotional tension, muscle tremors or twitches, unable to sit still for any length of time.
- **Fatigue:** decreased energy, ability to sleep, or a desire to sleep continuously.
- **Sleep Disturbances:** insomnia, bad dreams, nightmares, or waking up too early.
- **Diet:** change in eating or drinking habits. Increased or decreased intake.
- **Nausea:** queasiness, nausea, vomiting other gastrointestinal problems.
- **Recurring Memories:** thinking about the incident or some associated recurring memory.
- **Negative Feelings:** unpleasant feelings that may come without warning: profound sadness, helplessness, fear, anxiety, anger, rage, discouragement, frustration, sense of vulnerability, depression.
- **Self-Blame:** vague feeling of self-blame, fixed on some aspect of the event.

Interpersonal Problems: increased irritability, insensitivity, blaming others for your problems, wanting distance instead of closeness.