

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEETS

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes emergency service personnel to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either 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.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

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. With understanding and the support of loved ones the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

Here are some common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

<i>Physical*</i>	<i>Cognitive</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Behavioral</i>
chills	confusion	fear	withdrawal
thirst	nightmares	guilt	antisocial acts
fatigue	uncertainty	grief	inability to rest
nausea	hypervigilance	panic	intensified pacing
fainting	suspiciousness	denial	erratic movements
twitches	intrusive images	anxiety	change in social
vomiting	blaming someone	agitation	activity
dizziness	poor problem solving	irritability	change in speech
weakness	poor abstract thinking	depression	patterns
chest pain	poor attention/ decisions	intense anger	loss or increase of
headaches	poor concentration/memory	apprehension	appetite
elevated BP	disorientation of time, place	emotional shock	hyperalert to
rapid heart rate	or person	emotional outbursts	environment
muscle tremors	difficulty identifying	feeling overwhelmed	increased alcohol
shock symptoms	objects or people	loss of emotional	consumption
grinding of teeth	heightened or lowered	control	change in usual
visual difficulties	alertness	inappropriate emotional	communications
profuse sweating	increased or decreased	response	etc...
difficulty breathing	awareness of surroundings	etc...	
etc...	etc...		

Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation.

When in doubt, contact a physician.