

## How Others Can Help:

- Offer supportive assistance – listen carefully and patiently.
- Spend time with the person who has experienced the event.
- Reassure them that the event is over and they are now safe.
- Offer practical assistance such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children etc.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Remind the person that these are normal reactions to such an incident.
- Tell them you are sorry that they had this experience – do not say 'you were lucky it wasn't worse' or 'xyz could have happened'.
- Reassure them that the reactions will settle given time.
- Suggest that they seek help from an experienced and qualified psychologist or counsellor.



## When To Seek Further Support:

Any reactions or feelings after a critical incident can be reason to seek further advice and support. It is important to remember that the reactions being experienced generally resolve in time by themselves. However sometimes help and support is needed to assist with recovering after a critical incident.

Professional assistance can be accessed through either your organisation's Employee Assistance Service or through your general practitioner.

For further advice please contact:



**Emergency Support Network Pty Ltd**

Phone: +61 89 203 7777

Email: [info@emergencysupport.com.au](mailto:info@emergencysupport.com.au)

Web: [www.emergencysupport.com.au](http://www.emergencysupport.com.au)

## Important Note:

If symptoms continue to remain severe in intensity or persist more than a month, it is important to seek professional counselling.

# Critical Incident Support



## What is a Critical Incident?

A Critical Incident is any sudden or unexpected significant event that may be distressing to those involved. These events may involve injury to a person/s, loss of a person or property, a serious threat or any incident that creates an overwhelming emotional experience.

## Why am I Reacting?

Although the event may now be over, you may still continue to experience a range of emotions, physical symptoms and / or thoughts. These are very common and in fact, normal reactions after a person has experienced a distressing incident.

Sometimes these reactions may appear immediately after the event, or sometimes they may appear a few hours or even a few days later. Some people may not experience any reactions after an incident. All are normal reactions and there is no right or wrong way to react.

Reactions may last for a few days, a few weeks or occasionally months after the incident. If the reactions continue, it is suggested that you seek assistance from a qualified psychologist or counsellor. Seeking support is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of being resourceful. Sometimes events are so powerful they affect our coping mechanisms. A psychologist or counsellor can assist you to resolve these reactions.

## Common Reactions:

People after a critical incident can experience a range of reactions.

### Thoughts

- Slowed thinking & attention problems
- Difficulty making decisions or problem solving
- Confusion and disorientation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory problems
- Seeing the event over again or 'flashbacks'

### Emotions

- Anxiety
- Fear & worry
- Guilt
- Grief
- Sadness or depression
- Feeling lost or isolated
- Irritability & anger
- Feeling numb & shocked
- Relief

### Physical Symptoms

- Nausea & vomiting
- Digestive upsets & diarrhoea
- Tremors & sweating
- Rapid heart beat
- Increased blood pressure
- Headaches & dizziness
- Sore muscles
- Tiredness
- Chest pain
- Sleep disturbance

## Helping Yourself Cope:

- Acknowledge you have had a shock and these reactions are normal under the circumstances and will ease in time.
- Try to rest as you may be feeling more tired than usual.
- Contact supportive friends and family – talk to them about how you are feeling.
- Express your feelings to others when they arise no matter what these are.
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible.
- Try to keep a reasonable level of activity as distraction can help.
- Eat well balance and regular meals even if you don't feel hungry.
- Try to do some exercise.
- Your sleep may be disturbed for a while – try to avoid caffeine and sleeping tablets.
- Try not to make any big life changes or decisions for a while.
- Reassure yourself that the situation has passed and you are safe.
- Don't try to fight the thoughts or flashbacks – these are normal and part of the healing process as your mind tries to make sense of the incident.