



CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT

COPING AFTER ONE OR MORE DISTRESSING
EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE



EMERGENCY SUPPORT
NETWORK PTY LTD
Specialising in People Risk Management

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Any sudden event that causes an overwhelming emotional response is a critical incident.

Example of these can involve:

- Injury to a person
- Loss of a person
- Loss of property
- A threat to safety

Reactions can occur immediately, a few hours or even several days after the event. There is no one normal response and everybody's reaction is personal and valid.

Seeking support is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of resourcefulness.

COMMON REACTIONS

After a critical incident, people can experience a range of reactions, which include:

Disruption to thought

- Seeing the event repeatedly - 'flashbacks'
- Confusion and disorientation
- Difficulty concentrating on tasks and slowed thinking
- Memory problems

Emotional reactions

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

WHY AM I REACTING?

The distress caused by a critical incident may not be shared with others but that does not diminish the very legitimate need to cope with it effectively in order to restore emotional wellbeing. The experience of these effects are as individual as the person. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

HOW LONG WILL THE REACTIONS LAST?

Reactions may last from a few days to months after the incident occurred.

Physical reactions

- Nausea and vomiting
- Tremors and sweating
- Increased blood pressure and rapid heartbeat
- Sore muscles
- Headaches and dizziness
- Digestive upsets and diarrhea
- Chest pain
- Tiredness
- Sleep disturbance

Below is a range of advice tailored to help you deal with your own responses or to assist you to provide help when supporting someone close to you that has suffered a critical incident.

HELPING YOURSELF COPE

- Acknowledge that you have had a shock
- Acknowledge that your reactions are normal and will ease with time
- Try to rest
- Contact supportive friends, family and/or colleagues and express your feelings to them
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible
- Try to keep active and eat well balanced meals
- Try to eat enough even if you don't feel hungry
- Avoid caffeine and sleeping tablets to restore your usual sleeping habits
- Avoid making big life changes for a while
- Remind yourself that you are safe and that the incident is in the past
- Don't try to fight any recurring thoughts and flashbacks. These reflections are normal and your mind's way of trying to make sense of the incident

HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS COPE

- Spend time with them
- Listen carefully and patiently
- Reassure them that they are now safe and that the event is over
- Remind them that their reactions are normal
- Remind them that their reactions will fade with time
- Listen with sympathy to their experience and do not diminish the importance of their reactions. Avoid saying, for example, that they are lucky it wasn't worse.
- Offer practical assistance, such as cleaning, child minding, cooking, etc.

FURTHER SUPPORT

In certain circumstances, professional help from a qualified psychologist counsellor may be required to help assist personnel deal with their response to a critical incident. In these cases, **Emergency Support Network (ESN)** is able to provide carefully tailored support as necessary across a range of services. Examples of these include:

- Demobilisation (Rest, Information and Time Out - RIT)
- Defusing (Immediate Small Group Support - ISGS)
- Debriefing (Powerful Event Group Support - PEGS)
- One on One support sessions
- Follow up support
- Referral to an appropriate specialist, if required

To discuss your situation and requirements in confidence, please call or email us.

IMPORTANT NOTE

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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