

Hints on How to Cope:

Realize **those around** you are also under stress.

Do **NOT** make any big **life changes** or **decisions**.

DO make as many **daily decisions** as possible. This will give you a feeling of **control** over your life. *Example: If someone asks you what you want to eat, answer, even if you're not sure.*

Get plenty of **rest**.

If you **can't** get to **sleep**, get up and **write, read**, or do household **chores**, and then try again. *Do not lie in bed trying to get to sleep.*

Recurring **thoughts, dreams, and flashbacks** are **normal** — don't try to fight them — *they will decrease over time and become less painful.*

Eat **well-balanced meals** at regular intervals — *even if you don't feel like it.*

You have experienced a loss, give yourself permission to **grieve** or **cry**. *Tears are how we say "I care" when words are not enough.*

Do NOT expect **others** to **understand**, but DO *let them know you are hurting.*

Recognize that your **family members** may have suffered a loss, too (*a loss of security, etc.*). *Therefore, they may not be able to say the things you think they should.*

Information from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) was used to compose this brochure

How Family & Friends Can Help:

Listen carefully to understand and not to "fix" the situation..

Spend **time** with the traumatized person.

Offer your **assistance** and listening ear, even if they have not asked for help.

Answer the **phone** for them and refer **media** inquiries to a competent spokesperson.

Reassure them that they are **safe**.

Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, or childcare.

Give them some **private time**.

DO NOT take **their feelings** (*i.e. anger*), personally.

Expect that it will take **days** and **weeks** for them to **work through the emotions** and loss they have experienced.

DO NOT try to make it better by using phrases such as "**I know how you feel**", "**lucky it wasn't worse**", or "**at least you weren't hurt**". Such statements **do not console traumatized people**.

DO NOT tell them to "**get over it**" as this will alienate them, decrease communications, & increase isolation.

DO tell them that **you are sorry** such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.



Stress Management

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Bringing Christ to the Crisis

What is Critical Incident Stress?

ANY incident or traumatic event (*death, divorce, injury/illness, loss of job, etc.*) that causes you to experience unusually **strong emotional reactions** which have the **potential** to interfere with your ability to function at the time of the event or later.

What can you expect?

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 some people to experience “*emotional aftershock*” when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the **emotional aftershocks** (or *stress reactions*) **appear immediately** after the traumatic event. At other times they may appear a few hours or a few days **later**. (*In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reaction appears.*)

How long will the effects last?

The **signs and symptoms of 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 is necessary. (*This does not imply craziness or weakness.*) It simply indicates the event was so powerful a person may need **additional help to speed the recovery process**.

Signs & Signals of Stress*

Physical	Cognitive
Chills	Confusion
Thirst	Nightmares
Fatigue	Uncertainty
Nausea	Hyper-vigilance
Fainting	Suspiciousness
Twitches	Intrusive images/thoughts
Vomiting	Blaming someone/self
Dizziness	Poor problem solving
Weakness	Poor abstract thinking
Chest pain	Poor attention
Headaches	Poor decisions
Elevated blood pressure	Poor memory
Rapid heart rate	Poor concentration
Muscle tremors	Disorientation
Shock symptoms	Difficulty in:
Grinding of teeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognition
Visual difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alertness
Profuse sweating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> awareness of surroundings, etc.
Difficulty breathing	
Emotional	Behavioral
Fear	Withdrawal
Guilt	Antisocial acts
Grief	Inability to rest
Panic	Intensified pacing
Denial	Erratic movements
Anxiety	Shift in social activity
Agitation	Change in speech or appetite
Irritability	Hyper-alert
Depression	Increased alcohol use
Intense anger	Change in usual communications
Apprehension	Emotional outburst, tears, and crying spells
Emotional shock	“Gallows Humor”
Feeling overwhelmed	
Loss of emotional control	

*Any of these symptoms may indicate a need for medical evaluation..
When in doubt, consult a physician.

Things to Try:

Talk to people who will really listen — talking is the **best** healing medicine.

Drink lots of water — it will help your body **eliminate** some of the **chemical toxins** created by stress.

Avoid attempts to numb the pain with **drugs** and **alcohol**. (*These will only impede your ability to heal and may compound your journey to normalcy.*)

Within the first 24 to 48 hours, periods of appropriate **physical exercise**, alternated with **relaxation** will alleviate some of the physical reactions.

Structure your time — **keep busy**.

Keep a **journal**, write your way through those sleepless hours.

DO the **appropriate things** that make you **feel good**.

Reach out — you will find **people** do **care** although they may not know what to say.

Maintain a **normal schedule** as much as possible.

Spend **time** with **others**.

Help your **co-workers** by **sharing your feelings** and checking out how they are doing.

Give yourself **permission** to **feel rotten** and share your feelings with others.

Remember, you are having a **normal reaction**. (*Don't label yourself crazy!*)