

Critical Incident Stress

Things to Try

- ◆ Within the first 24 to 48 hours have periods of (light) physical exercise alternated with relaxation. This will alleviate most of the physical reactions to a traumatic event.
- ◆ Structure your time – keep moderately busy.
- ◆ You're normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy.
- ◆ Talk to people – talking is the most health promoting thing you can do for yourself.
- ◆ Avoid numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol. It is much better for you to work through the reactions to a traumatic event fully aware of your journey.
- ◆ Reach out to others you trust with your emotions – people do care.
- ◆ Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- ◆ Spend time with other people as long as they are good company for you.
- ◆ Reach out to your co-workers as much as possible by sharing your own feelings and checking out how they are doing. The things you're experiencing may help to normalize their reactions too.
- ◆ Give yourself permission to feel rotten occasionally. You can fake it, till you make it.
- ◆ Keep a journal or diary; write your way through those sleepless hours.
- ◆ Do things that feel good to you. (read, seek counsel, pray, listen to music, etc.)
- ◆ Realize those around you are likely unsure how best to support you.
- ◆ Don't make big decisions or major changes (quit work, buy a car, sell your house, etc.)
- ◆ Make as many smaller daily decisions as possible, which will give you back a feeling of control over your life, i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them - even if you don't have a strong preference.
- ◆ Get plenty of rest; however, if sleep comes with difficulty, then nap often for a while.
- ◆ Re-occurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are "normal," don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less powerful.
- ◆ Eat well-balanced and regular meals. You need nutrition even if you don't feel hungry.

For Family Members and Friends

- ◆ Listen carefully and patiently.
- ◆ Spend time with your loved one.
- ◆ Offer your assistance and a listening ear, even if they haven't asked for help.
- ◆ Reassure them that they are safe and they are not alone.
- ◆ Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, nurturing children. Help them return to a regular routine as soon as possible.
- ◆ Give them some private time and space, but don't let them isolate from you.
- ◆ Don't take their anger, impatience, or other feelings personally.