Critical Incident Stress Reactions

These are some of the reactions you may experience following a stressful event or situation:

**Physical Reactions**
- Fatigue/Exhaustion
- Underactivity
- Change in appetite
- Headaches
- Insomnia (which may turn into hypersomnia)
- Digestive problems
- Nightmares
- Hyperactivity
- Exhaustion
- Startled Reactions
- Muscle tremors or twitches

**Cognitive Reactions**
- Difficulty with concentration
- Difficulty solving problems
- Flashbacks
- Isolating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Memory disturbance
- Preoccupation with the event
- Violent fantasies

**Emotional Reactions**
- Fear
- Guilt
- Emotional numbing
- Overly sensitive
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Feelings of helplessness/hopelessness
- Amnesia for the event
- Anger, which may be manifest by: scapegoating, irritability, frustration with bureaucracy, violent fantasies

These are normal reactions and, although painful, they are part of the healing process. There is not a lot anyone can do to make you not experience these uncomfortable feelings, but there are things you can do to feel more whole.

**Things to Try:**
- **WITHIN THE FIRST 24-48 HOURS,** periods of strenuous physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time—keep busy
- You are normal and having normal reactions—don’t label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people about what you are experiencing—talk is the most healing medicine.
- Don’t numb the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; you don’t need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out—people do care.
- Keep your lives as normal as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel depressed and overwhelmed, and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- The Nutrition Almanac recommends supplementing your diet with Vitamin C, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B6, Calcium, and Magnesium.
- Continue your normal pattern of activities as much as possible.
- Don’t make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat, answer them even if you are not sure.
- Remind yourself that you’re normal and are having normal reactions—don’t label yourself “crazy.”
Checklist for Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>