

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:

- | Yes | No | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person has experienced, witnessed, or confronted an event that threatened serious injury, physical harm, or death. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person responds with intense fear, helplessness, or horror. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences recurring and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences distressing dreams of the event. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person may act or feel as if the traumatic event is reoccurring (a sense of reliving the experience through illusions, hallucinations, or flashbacks). |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences an inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences a markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person experiences a feeling of detachment or estrangement from others. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person feels unable to have loving feelings, or other strong feelings. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person feels a sense of a foreshortened future. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person has difficulty falling or staying asleep. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person feels unusually irritable or has outbursts of anger. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person has difficulty concentrating. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person feels on guard, distrustful of others. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The person avoids being touched, and if touched unexpectedly, has a strong, startled response. |