

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEETS



You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally). 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 people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. The understanding and the support of loved ones usually cause the stress reactions to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by him/herself.

Here are some common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

Physical*	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
Chills	Confusion	Fear	Withdrawal
Thirst	Nightmares	Guilt	Antisocial acts
Fatigue	Uncertainty	Grief	Inability to rest
Nausea	Hypervigilance	Panic	Intensified pacing
Fainting	Suspiciousness	Denial	Erratic movements
Twitches	Intrusive images	Anxiety	Change in social activity
Vomiting	Blaming someone	Agitation	Change in speech patterns
Dizziness	Poor problem solving	Irritability	Loss or increase in appetite
Weakness	Poor abstract thinking	Depression	Hyperalert to environment
Chest pain	Poor attention/decisions	Intense anger	Increased alcohol consumption
Headaches	poor concentration/memory	Apprehension	Change in usual communications
Elevated BP	Disorientation of time, place or person	Emotional shock	Etc.
Rapid heart rate	Difficulty identifying objects or people	Emotional outbursts	
Muscle tremors	Heightened or lowered alertness	Feeling overwhelmed	
Shock symptoms	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Loss of emotional control	
Gringing of teeth		Inappropriate emotional response	
Visual difficulties		Etc.	
Profuse sweating			
Difficulty breathing			
Etc.			

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