

Physical

- Thirst
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Fainting
- Twitches
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Chest Pain
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Chills
- Rapid Heart Rate
- Headaches
- Muscle Tremors
- Shock Symptoms
- Grinding of Teeth
- Visual Difficulties
- Profuse Sweating
- Difficulty Breathing

Emotional

- Fear
- Guilt
- Grief
- Panic
- Denial
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Depression
- Intense Anger
- Apprehension
- Emotional Shock
- Emotional Outbursts
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Loss of Emotional Control
- Inappropriate Emotional Response

Cognitive

- Confusion
- Nightmares
- Uncertainty
- Hyper Vigilant
- Suspiciousness
- Intrusive Memories
- Blaming Someone
- Poor Problem Solving
- Poor Abstract Thinking
- Poor Concentration
- Poor Memory
- Poor Attention
- Poor Decisions
- Disorientated to Time, Place, or Person
- Difficulty Identifying Objects or People
- Heightened or Lowered Alertness
- Change in Awareness of Surroundings

Behavioural

- Withdrawal
- Anti-Social Acts
- Intensified Pacing
- Erratic Movements
- Change in Social Activity
- Change in Speech Patterns
- Loss or Increase of Appetite
- Unable to Rest
- Hyper-Alert to Environment
- Increased Substance Use (e.g., alcohol, over-the-counter drugs, recreational drugs)
- Changes in usual communications

MANDATE OF THE ALBERTA CRITICAL INCIDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (ACIAC)

The ACIAC provides advice on the development, training, maintenance, and sustainability of a peer-support model specific to first responders in the province of Alberta.

The ACIAC's purpose is to provide consultation, education, resources, and support to Provincial first responder personnel and to develop, support, and advise on a provincial standard interagency approach to critical incident response.



ALBERTA CRITICAL INCIDENT PROVINCIAL NETWORK (ACIPN)

The ACIPN is a peer led, peer driven support network of first responders for first responders, whose volunteers are trained in best practices and deliver support in accordance with the ACIAC standards.

www.abcism.ca

Call 1-833-894-2476 if you require immediate assistance.

Content taken from Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell's Critical Incident Stress Management seminars.

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AFTER A CRISIS

Practical tips for self-care after a critical incident



Images by DanSun Photo Art

STRESS MANAGEMENT AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

You have experienced a traumatic event or critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions and 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 and quite normal for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCKS

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after, a few hours later or days after traumatic event. 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, weeks, months, or longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event.

The understanding and support of loved ones usually causes the stress reaction to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary.

THINGS TO TRY

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

- Structure your time and keep busy!
- Remember that you are normal, having a normal reaction to an abnormal event. Don't start labeling yourself as crazy.
- Reach out to friends and family. Talk to them and spend time with others. People do care.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs and/or alcohol. You don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten 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.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible that will give you a sense of control over your life.
- Get plenty of rest. Don't try to fight reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks – they are normal and will decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Listen Carefully.

Spend time with the traumatized person.

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

Reassure them that they are safe.

Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for family and minding children. Give them some private time.

Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.

Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". Such statements do not console a traumatized person. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event occurred and you want to understand and assist them.



Image by DanSun Photo Art