

## After a Critical Incident

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The First 24 Hours After an Event:

- Periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reaction.
- Structure your time - keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reaction - don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people - talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with over use of drugs or alcohol, you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out - people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule 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 rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through the sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- **Don't make any big life changes or decisions.**
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life. If some one asks you what to eat-answer them even if you're not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

## For Family Members & Friends

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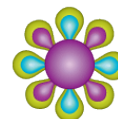
- Listen carefully.
  - Spend time with the traumatized person.
  - Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
  - Reassure them that they are safe.
  - Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, and minding children.
  - Give them some private time.
  - Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
  - Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - that statement does not console traumatized people. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred, and you want to understand and assist them.
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We recommend that these incidents should be an "AUTOMATIC CALL OUT." This means that the critical incident response team should always be contacted for each of these events.:

1. Work related death
2. Serious line of duty injury
3. Suicide of a co-worker
4. Multi-casualty incident
5. Violence that ends with injury or death

These are incidents for which you should consider contacting the critical incident response team to elect recommendations for intervention:

1. Death or violence to a child
2. A prolonged event, with negative results
3. Incident with extensive media attention
4. Knowing the victim of the event
5. Incident charged with profound emotion



Mental Health &  
Recovery Services  
Board of  
Allen, Auglaize and  
Hardin Counties  
[www.wecarepeople.org](http://www.wecarepeople.org)



## School/Adolescent Informational Sheet

**A volunteer team of public safety and affiliate professionals serving regional fire, EMS, law enforcement, industry, educational, and other organizations involved in any type of critical incident.**

Confidential services provided at no charge:

Pre-Incident Stress Education  
Individual Peer Support  
Crisis Management Briefing  
Defusing  
Debriefing

To Request Service/Response:

**1-800-567-4673**

For Information Contact::  
[allencountycism@gmail.com](mailto:allencountycism@gmail.com)  
[wocism@gmail.com](mailto:wocism@gmail.com)



## Adults and Stress

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function). 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 after shocks 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 occasionally longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor 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 himself or herself.

## Talking to Children about Death & Grief Reactions

There are no recipes or formulas for grieving. Many factors affect how a child grieves including developmental stage of life of the child(ren), maturity, previous exposure to death and loss, and family dynamics. Social support can be offered to the child(ren) by family members, extended family members, friends, and neighbors.

## Common Signs of Stress

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

### Physical

Fatigue  
Nausea  
Muscle tremors  
Twitches  
Chest pain\*  
Difficulty breathing\*  
Elevated B/P  
Headache  
Thirst  
Profuse sweating  
Chills  
Shock symptoms\*  
Vomiting  
Weakness  
Grinding teeth  
Visual difficulties  
Dizziness

### Emotional

Anxiety  
Guilt  
Grief  
Denial  
Severe panic  
Emotional shock  
Fear  
Uncertainty  
Agitation  
Intense anger  
Apprehension  
Loss of emotional control or depression  
Feeling overwhelmed  
Inappropriate emotional response

### Cognitive

Confusion  
Poor attention  
Poor decisions  
Heightened/Lowered alertness  
Problems w/hyper—vigilance  
Difficulty recognizing familiar things  
Poor problem solving  
Poor abstract thinking  
Nightmares  
Loss of orientation—time, place, person  
Intrusive images

### Behavioral

Changes in society  
Changes in speech patterns  
Loss/Increase appetite  
Withdrawal  
Emotional outburst  
Pacing  
Startle reflex  
Alcohol consumption  
Inability to rest  
Changes in sexual function  
Erratic acts  
Antisocial behavior  
Non-specific bodily complaints  
Changes in communication skills

\* - Seek medical attention

## Typical Post Crisis Behaviors for Children

### Pre-School or Kindergarten Age Children

#### Normal Reactions

Separation anxiety  
Self-comforting  
Frustration  
Difficulty interacting

#### Concerning Reactions

Uncontrolled sleep  
Drifting off  
Eating disruption  
Loss of Physical Control  
Fighting  
Assaults  
Pandemonium  
Isolation behavior

### Elementary Age Children

#### Normal Reactions

Anxiety  
Fear  
Withdrawal  
Frustration  
Difficulty interacting  
Rule testing

#### Concerning Reactions

Regression  
Uncontrolled acting out  
Fighting  
Assaults  
Pandemonium  
Isolation behavior  
Behavioral contagion

### Middle / High School Age Children

#### Normal Reactions

Anxiety  
Fear  
Withdrawal  
Frustration  
Difficulty interacting  
Rule testing  
Emotional Contagion

#### Concerning Reactions

Regression  
Uncontrolled acting out  
Substance abuse  
Fighting  
Assaults  
Pandemonium  
Isolation behavior  
Behavioral contagion

### Recommended Referral to Medical/Mental Health

Uncontrolled hysteria  
Disconnection  
Immobility  
Inability to protect self  
Profound hopelessness  
Profound helplessness  
Profound powerlessness