

Critical Incident Stress Information

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident. 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 reaction) 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 stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and 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 themselves.

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

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioural</u>
Fatigue	Blaming someone	Anxiety	Change in activity
Nausea	Confusion	Guilt	Change in speech
Muscle tremors	Poor attention	Grief	Patterns
Twitches	Poor decisions	Denial	Withdrawal
Chest Pain	Heightened or lowered alertness	Severe panic (rare)	Emotional outbursts
Difficulty breathing	Poor concentration	Fear	Suspiciousness
Elevated BP	Memory problems	Uncertainty	Change in usual communications
Rapid heart rate	Hyper-vigilance	Loss of emotional control	Loss or increase of appetite
Thirst	Difficulty in identifying familiar objects or people	Depression	Alcohol consumption
Headaches	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Inappropriate emotional response	Inability to rest
Visual difficulties	Poor problem solving	Apprehension	Antisocial acts
Vomiting	Loss of time, place or person orientation	Feeling overwhelmed	Nonspecific bodily complaints
Grinding of teeth	Disturbed thinking	Intense anger	Hyperalert to environment
Weakness	Nightmares	Irritability	Startle reflex intensified
Dizziness	Intrusive images	Agitation	Erratic movements
Chills			Change in sexual functioning
Shock symptoms			
Fainting			