

# HELPING YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER COPE AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Your loved one has experienced a critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions that has the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally).



Even though the event may be over, your loved one may now be experiencing, or might experience later, some emotional or physical reactions. These reactions are very common and normal for people to experience after they've passed through a horrific event.

Signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may appear immediately after the event or a while after and can last a few days, weeks, months or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. While support from loved ones often eases the stress reactions, sometimes people who have just experienced a critical incident benefit from professional assistance. Seeking outside help is common, normal, and does not indicate weakness or a mental health issue.



Reactions to critical incident stress may be physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and spiritual, or for some people, they might not experience a stress reaction at all.

Your significant other is probably not the only one having a difficult time with the event—suffering from effects of critical incident stress is very common.

All aspects of our lives overlap and influence each other: personal, professional, family, etc. The impact of the critical incident can be intensified, influenced, or mitigated by our own personal, family, or current issues.

If you're looking for ways to help your loved one, the best thing to do is to be supportive by encouraging your loved one to talk about the incident and their reaction to it and listening and reassuring them when they do.



## PHYSICAL/BODY



- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Elevated blood pressure
- Nonspecific body complaints
- Loss or increase in appetite

## COGNITIVE/MIND



- Blaming someone
- Poor concentration
- Memory problems
- Poor problem solving
- Disturbed thinking
- Nightmares
- Poor decision making

## EMOTIONS/FEELINGS



- Anxiety
- Grief
- Denial
- Fear
- Depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling isolated
- Guilt

## BEHAVIORAL ACTIONS



- Change in socialization
- Change in eating habits
- Inability to rest/relax
- Increase in alcohol and/or drug consumption
- Change in sexual functioning
- Sleep problems

## SPIRITUAL REACTIONS



- Crisis of faith
- Doubt
- Preoccupation
- Questioning in beliefs or values