

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

In response to an event a person may have unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally.

Length of Impact

After an event a person may immediately experience 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.

Responses

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 himself.

Cognitive

signs and signals of a stress reaction

- confusion
- nightmares
- uncertainty
- hypervigilance
- suspiciousness
- intrusive images
- blaming someone
- poor problem solving
- poor abstract thinking
- poor attention/ decisions

Behavioral signs and signals of a stress reaction

- withdrawal
- antisocial acts
- inability to rest
- intensified pacing
- erratic movements
- change in social activity
- change in speech patterns
- loss or increase of appetite

Emotional signs and signals of a stress reaction

- fear
- guilt
- grief
- panic
- denial
- anxiety
- agitation
- irritability
- depression
- intense anger
- apprehension
- emotional shock
- emotional outbursts

Physical signs and signals of a stress reaction

- *Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation.*
- chills
- thirst
- fatigue
- nausea
- fainting
- twitches
- vomiting
- dizziness
- weakness
- chest pain
- headaches
- elevated BP
- rapid heart rate

THINGS TO TRY

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 - 48 HOURS Following an Event

- periods of appropriate physical exercise
- Relaxing activities
- Structure your time; keep busy.
- Don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people about what you are thinking and how you are feeling.
- Be aware of *numbing* the pain with overuse 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.

THINGS TO TRY

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 - 48 HOURS Following an Event

- 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 feeling 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).

How to help others

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if (s)he has not asked for help.
- Reassure the person that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they is "lucky it wasn't worse;" a traumatized person is not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

School Support – High School

Port Jervis High School

- **School Psychologist** – Noel Bushey 845-858-3223
- **Guidance Counselors:**
 - Laurie Kahmar - 845-858-3144 (*A to D*)
 - Julie Balogh - 845-858-3695 (*E to L*)
 - Angela Terralavoro- 845-858-3109 (*M to SAZ*)
 - Kate Oldham, Guidance Chairperson - 845-858-3107 (*Sca to Z*)
 - Julie Nimal - 845-858-3106 (*Freshman Academy*)
- **School Social Worker** - Erin Lehn – 845-858-3884

School Support – Middle School

Port Jervis Middle School

- **School Psychologist:** Jody Hanlon - 845-858-3160
- **Guidance Counselors:**
 - Anthony Caporale – 845-858-3154 (A – L)
 - Bethany Mortenson – 845-858-3155 (M - Z)

School Social Worker: Diane Marsin-Furst – 845-858-3278

School Support – Elementary Schools

Anna S. Kuhl Elementary School

- **School Psychologist:** Shannon Johnson – 845-858-3171
- **Guidance Counselor:** Erin Bratton - 858-3142
- **School Social Worker** – Lisa Whiteman – 845-858- 3208

Hamilton-Bicentennial Elementary School

- **School Psychologist:** Vicky Harris - 754-8337
- **Guidance Counselor:** Dawn Jones - 754-8350
- **School Social Worker** – Lisa Whiteman – 845-754-8531

Community Support and Direction

- **Helpline 1-800-832-1200** is a 24/7 hotline offered by the Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. that provides crisis intervention, information and referrals.
- **Mobile Mental Health Team (MMHT)**
1-888-750-2266 provides help to individuals and families experiencing an emotional or situational crisis. The MMHT is available to provide phone and outreach 24/7.

Community Support and Direction (cont'd)

- Dial **211** it is a free, confidential, health and human service multi-lingual, information and referral telephone service.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK.
- Mental Health Clinics for children, adolescents & families:
 - Child and Family Clinic (Newburgh) 845-568-5260
 - Port Jervis Mental Health Clinic 845-858-1456
 - Occupations (various locations) 1-888-750-2266
 - Arden Hill Hospital, Behavioral Health 845-294-7931