

Critical Incident Stress Information

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions 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, in fact quite *normal*, for people to experience emotional aftershocks 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 longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. 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 support is needed to manage the particular event.

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

Physical

- chills
- thirst
- fatigue
- nausea
- fainting
- twitches
- vomiting

Cognitive

- confusion
- nightmares
- uncertainty
- hypervigilance
- suspiciousness
- intrusive images
- blaming someone

Emotional

- fear
- guilt
- grief
- panic
- denial
- anxiety
- agitation

Behavioral

- withdrawal
- antisocial acts
- inability to rest
- intensified pacing
- erratic movements
- change in social activity

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