



Livingston Crisis Chaplaincy



CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a **CRITICAL INCIDENT**.

You may be experiencing unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with your ability to function now or some time in the future. Even though the event may be over you may experience strong emotional or physical reactions now or some time in the future. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have participated in a traumatic event.

THESE ARE NORMAL REACTIONS TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT!!

Sometimes these emotional aftershocks (Stress Reactions) appear immediately. In some cases they are delayed a few hours or days, and sometimes they are postponed for weeks or months.

The signs and symptoms of stress may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months. Occasionally the symptoms remain for longer periods depending upon the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and support from loved ones, friends, and/or colleagues these reactions usually pass more quickly. Sometimes the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a trained counselor is necessary. This in no way implies weakness or mental illness. It simply indicates that this particular event was too powerful for the individual to manage by themselves.

Listed below are some of the more common signs and symptoms of **STRESS**.

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL	SPIRITUAL
fatigue	blaming someone	anxiety	change activity	Anger at God
nausea	confusion	guilt	change in speech patterns	Feeling distant from God
muscle tremors	poor attention	grief	withdrawal	Withdraw from place of worship
twitches	poor decisions	denial	emotional outbursts	Uncharacteristic religious involvement
chest pain*	raised/lowered alertness	emotional shock	suspiciousness	Sudden turn toward God
difficulty breathing*	poor concentration	fear	change in usual communications	Familiar faith practices seem empty (prayer, scriptures, hymns)
elevated BP*	memory problems	uncertainty	restlessness	Religious rituals seem empty (worship, communion)
thirst	hypervigilance	emotion control problems	alcohol use increase	Belief that God is powerless
headaches	difficulty ID-ing familiar objects	depression	loss/increase in appetite	loss of meaning and purpose
visual problems	more awareness of surroundings	inappropriate emotions	acting out (antisocial behavior)	Sense of isolation (from God, religious community)
vomiting	less awareness of surroundings	apprehension	nonspecific body complaints	Questioning of one's basic beliefs
grinding teeth / (bruxism)	poor problem solving ability	feeling overwhelmed	hyperalert to environment	Anger at clergy
weakness	poor abstract thinking	intense anger	intensified startle reflex	Believing God is not in control
dizziness	loss of orientation	irritability	pacing	Believing God doesn't care
profuse sweating	impaired thinking	agitation	erratic movements	Belief that we have failed God
chills and/or sweating, etc.	nightmares	severe panic (rare)	increase/decrease in sexual drive	
shock symptoms*	flashbacks / intrusive images			

IF YOU NEED HELP OR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Livingston Crisis Chaplaincy

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Things To Try:

- WITHIN THE FIRST 24 -48 HOURS periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time; keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reactions; don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people; talk is the most healing medicine.
- 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.
- Keep a journal; write your way through 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; i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat, answer him even if you're not sure.
- 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).
- If symptoms persist, get help.

For Family Members & Friends

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