

# REACTIONS FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT



During the next few days, week or month you may at sometime experience one or more of these normal reactions to trauma. The key to managing stress is to recognize these common reactions:

## Physical

Fatigue/Exhaustions  
Insomnia  
Sleep Disturbances  
Over/Under Activity  
Nightmares  
Change in appetite  
Digestive problems  
Physical problems  
Headaches  
Nausea

## Cognitive

Lack of Concentration  
Flashbacks  
Difficulty with Decisions  
Memory Disturbance  
Forgetfulness  
Confusion  
Poor Problem Solving  
Disturbed Thinking  
Change in Alertness

## Emotional

Fear  
Guilt  
Emotional Numbing  
Over Sensitivity  
Anxiety  
Depression  
Feeling Helpless  
Anger  
Irritability  
Frustration

## Behavioral

Change in Activity  
Communication Changes  
Withdrawal  
Suspiciousness  
Hyper-Alertness  
Exaggerated Startle Reflex  
Change in Sexual Behavior  
Emotional Outbursts  
Difficulty Sitting Still

**Remember** that these reactions to trauma are normal. In order to cope with what you have experienced here are some things to try that are known to lessen or alleviate stress:

- Within the first 24-48 hours, periods of physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of your physical reactions.
- Structure your time-try to stay on a schedule.
- You are normal and are having normal reactions - do not label yourself as crazy
- Talk to people- talk is the most healing medicine. Accept help from others.
- Beware of numbing the pain with drugs, alcohol or other addictive behaviors
- Spend time with friends or family, don't isolate yourself.
- Help those around you as much as possible by sharing your feelings
- Give yourself permission to feel bad, sad, angry, etc.
- Write it down-writing helps to alleviate stressful thoughts and sleeplessness.
- Eat nutritious, well-balanced meals and avoid excessive use of caffeine
- Don't make any big decisions or life changes while you are in crisis.