

### **Dealing With Specific Feelings of CIS**

You may wish to use some of these techniques if you are dealing with any of these issues:

#### **Loss of Control**

Make as many decisions as possible to give you a sense of control over your life.

#### **Vulnerability**

Take realistic measures to promote your safety and the safety of your family.

#### **Fear and Panic**

DO NOT concentrate on the fear and panic you may feel, but concentrate on the resources you used to get through the situation and recognize these resources as strengths.

#### **Responsibility and Guilt**

Remember you cannot always control everything that is happening around you, but you can control your response to the situation. Do not take responsibility for events you cannot control.

#### **CRITICAL REMINDER**

**Remember that you are a normal person experiencing normal reactions to an abnormal situation.**

### **TIPS FOR FAMILIES**

Families and friends can help victims of CIS by utilizing some of the following techniques:

- Listen carefully and frequently.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Spend private time with the person experiencing CIS.
- Help them with everyday tasks as much as possible.
- Tell them you're sorry the event occurred and you want to understand and help them. Don't tell them it could have been worse, this rarely helps.
- Give them time for themselves, if needed.
- Include them in daily decisions so they gain their sense of control.

For further information or assistance, contact:

**CATTARAUGUS COUNTY  
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES  
M-F, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. – (716) 938-2213  
After hours – (716) 498-0697**

## **FACTS ABOUT CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**



**From the**

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**of Cattaraugus County**

## Critical Incident Stress

Critical Incident Stress is the aftershock of dealing with an emotional, traumatic, or life threatening event. It is the normal response of the body and mind to an abnormal event.

There are two types:

1. Acute stress reaction which may occur while you are involved in the situation.
2. Delayed stress reaction when the stress responses may occur hours, days or even weeks after the incident.

### Symptoms of CIS may include:

- Panic, hyperventilation, increased anxiety.
- Tightness or pain in the chest.
- Elevated blood pressure and pulse.
- Heart palpitations
- Numbness.
- Nausea, vomiting.
- Depression, increased crying spells.
- Headaches
- Increased irritability
- Change in appetite and/or sleep patterns.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Fatigue.

- Nightmares.
- Flashbacks.
- 15. Sensitivity to odors, i. e, blood, urine, burning flesh, etc.
- Decreased sexual desire.
- Poor concentration.
- Changes in menstrual cycle.
- Feelings of grief and guilt.
- Feelings of vulnerability.
- Chronic diarrhea.
- Obsessive thoughts about the incident
- Increased alcohol and drug use.
- Marital conflict.
- Increased use of morbid humor.
- Loss of a sense of humor.

### Strategies for combating CIS:

During the incident:

- Use deep breathing techniques to relieve of stress and anxiety.
- Rotate personnel so stress is intermittent.
- Don't look at something gruesome if you don't have to.
- Don't ingest a lot of sugar and/or caffeine during the incident.

After the incident:

- Get enough rest.
- Eat well balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid boredom, keep busy.
- Use relaxation techniques daily.
- Use Vitamins B and C which are

helpful during times of stress.

- Remember alcohol and drugs are not solutions and may prolong the problem.
- Try not to make any major changes in your life during this time.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Attend debriefings if available.
- Help out your co-workers deal with their stress by checking out their symptoms and sharing yours.
- Share your stress with the ones you love.
- If symptoms do not subside after 6-8 weeks, seek professional help.

## CRITICAL REMINDERS

**Do not criticize anyone for not being able to function during a traumatic situation; instead, offer support.**

**Remember these are NORMAL responses to abnormal stress.**

**Remember that all debriefings are confidential and that they are NOT a time for criticism.**