

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS REACTIONS

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Over the next month you will experience normal reactions to the kind of experience you've had which may include:

Physical Reactions

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| Fatigue | Nightmares |
| Insomnia (which may turn into hypersomnia) | Hyperactivity |
| Underactivity | Exhaustion |
| Health problems (such as a change in appetite, headache, digestive problems) | Startle Reactions |

Cognitive Reactions

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|---|-----------------------------|
| Difficulty with concentration | Difficulty making decisions |
| Difficulty solving problems | Memory disturbance |
| Flashbacks | Isolating |
| Inability to attach importance to anything other than this incident | |

Emotional Reactions

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|--|--------------------------|
| Fear | Anxiety |
| Guilt | Depression |
| Emotional numbing | Feelings of helplessness |
| Over-sensitivity | Amnesia for the event |
| Anger – which may be manifest by: Scapegoating, irritability, frustration with bureaucracy, violent fantasies | |

These are normal reactions, and although painful, are part of the healing process. There's not a lot anyone can do to make you not experience these uncomfortable feelings but there are things you can do to feel more whole.

Things to try:

- **Within the first 24-48 hours** periods of strenuous 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.
- Keep your lives as normal as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they're doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- The Nutrition Almanac recommends supplementing your diet with Vitamin C, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B6, Calcium and Magnesium.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them even if you're not sure.