



# SELF CARE FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

## WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

**Any event, which has the ability to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of an individual or individuals, is considered a critical incident. Critical incidents are usually sudden, powerful events, which are outside the normal range or ordinary human experiences. Due to the sudden and unusual events, they can escalate a strong emotional effect even on well-trained professionals.**

### Common Signs/Symptoms/Reactions/Concerns

Critical incidents may produce a wide range of stress symptoms. These symptoms usually occur in five different categories: cognitive (thinking), physical (body), emotions (feelings), behavioral (actions), and spiritual. The more symptoms experience, the more powerful the stress reaction. The longer the symptoms persist, the more potential there is for lasting harm. The following is only a sample of stress symptoms that can show up after a critical incident.

#### COGNITIVE

- Poor Concentration
- Poor Attention Span
- Slowed Problem Solving
- Difficulties with Calculations
- Difficulty with Decision Making
- Memory Problems

#### EMOTIONAL

- Guilt
- Depression
- Grief
- Feeling Lost/Overwhelmed
- Anxiety/Fear
- Loss of Emotional Control

#### PHYSICAL

- Muscle Tremors
- Gastrointestinal Distress
- Headaches
- Chest Pains

- Difficulty Breathing
- Elevated Blood Pressure

#### BEHAVIORAL

- Excessive Silence
- Extreme Behavioral Changes
- Withdrawal from Contact
- Sleep Disturbances
- Changes in Eating Habits
- Changes in Work Habits

#### SPIRITUAL

- Uncharacteristic religious involvement
- Sense of isolation from God
- Loss of meaning or purpose
- Withdrawal from place of worship
- Anger at clergy
- Questioning basic beliefs
- Faith practices seem empty
- Anger at God

Thoughts and reactions in relation to a stressful event may last a few days, weeks or months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be beneficial and necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. The need simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the individual to manage on his/her own.

### CISM INTERVENTION PROCESS

- Confidential
- Peer driven
- Ensures ATs are not alone
- Allows ventilation
- Educational
- Not a critique
- Available at no charge
- Allows for peer support

### CISM CORE ELEMENTS

- Pre-Incident Education/Preparation
- On-Scene Support Services
- Individual Crisis Intervention
- Group Crisis Intervention
- Administrative Staff Consultations
- Defusings
- Debriefings
- Family Education/Support
- Follow-Up Services

## TIPS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- Listen carefully
- Spend quality time with loved one
- Reassure their safety
- Allow for private time
- Avoid critiquing, probing or attempting to “fix” the problem
- Support with everyday tasks, as household chores, childcare, cooking
- Avoid statements such as, “it’s God’s will”, “It could have happened to anyone”, “It could have been so much worse”, etc.

## Take Care of Yourself Following a Critical Incident

- **Vigorous exercise**
- **Plenty of rest/relaxation**
- **Normal routine**
- **Structure your time, keep busy**
- **Use Vitamins B & C to increase immune resistance decreased by stress**
- **Spend time with your trusted family, friends and co-workers**
- **Share your thoughts with trusted family, friends and co-workers**
- **Deep breathing exercises/mediation**
- **Do things that feel good to you**
- **Reach out and avoid isolation**
- **Avoid life altering decisions**
- **Avoid/reduce the use of caffeine, drugs and alcohol**
- **Keep a personal journal - write your way through sleepless nights**
- **Maintain good posture**
- **Watch out for your peers and/or co-workers**
- **Remember it is OK to smile and laugh**
- **Recognize you are experiencing stress**

## Avoid these negative coping strategies

- **Denial or ignoring the problem**
- **Fault finding, complaining, criticizing or judging**
- **Indulging, impulse purchasing, wasting time, sleeping in**
- **Passivity or procrastination**
- **Revenge, striking out against others, sarcasm**
- **Stubbornness, rigidity, demanding your own way, or refusing to be swayed**

\* Watch out for illnesses, developing headaches, stomach disorders and accident proneness.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**The ATs Care Mission is to aid athletic trainers in the aftermath of a catastrophic incident by establishing a peer-to-peer system to assist, monitor and encourage these individuals to seek initial support through state or regional athletic training care teams.**

**WE ARE HERE TO HELP. PLEASE REACH OUT USING YOUR ATs CARE TEAM MEMBERS CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW!**

Name:

Phone:

Email:

For more info,  
<http://www.nata.org/membership/about-membership/member-resources/ats-care>