



### What is a Critical Incident?

**Trauma** is an “event outside the usual realm of human experience that would be markedly distressing to anyone who experienced it.”

When one endures such an event, we refer to it as a critical incident, because it causes stress that has the potential to disrupt the person’s usual coping mechanisms. It evokes significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone. What may seem to many to be conflicting responses are usually quite normal, or as Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor stated, “An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior.”

### What do I need to know?

**There is a common misunderstanding** that a so called, “abnormal reaction” to trauma or psychological “fall out” is primarily due to a weakness in the individual. The implication is that a healthy functioning person will be unaffected by trauma or

## REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

critical incident stress no matter how gruesome, gory or disturbing the situation may be. This thinking leads to the incorrect assumption that a person who displays symptoms of Critic Incident Stress is in some way a weak person or lacks the ability to cope. This is simply not true. Anyone, no matter how mentally healthy, who is exposed to this type of stress could possibly suffer any number of unpredictable emotional reactions.

### How could this affect me?

**Everyone will respond to Critical Incident Stress in their own unique way.** Difficulty in initially coming to terms with one’s feelings and emotions following an event is perfectly normal. You may feel deeply moved by an event when others don’t seem to be experiencing the same emotions. There are variables that affect all of us; our support system; how horrific and stressful the trauma; a person’s emotional makeup; thoughts about the incident; actions during the incident, or how much the event may bring to mind some other event or personal issue. All of these have a bearing on one’s mental and physical well being. It is possible you may have experienced one or more of the common symptoms listed here and on the following page:

- Agitation, Denial, or Numbness
- Repetitive or Intrusive Thoughts of the Incident

- Sleep Disturbance, Nightmares, or Constant Waking
- Painful Emotions, Depression, or Sadness
- Guilt, Loss of Control, or Anger
- Physical Issues; Pain, Headaches, Sexual Dysfunction, Easily Startled, Spontaneous Shaking
- Hyper-Activity or Lethargy

### Where can I seek further assistance?

**Utilize the back page** of this brochure to help list the specific concerns you are experiencing. It is important to know your well being may be negatively impacted at this point. If you feel your situation has moved beyond what might be considered “Normal,” the immediacy of you taking action for yourself is a critical next step.

**As the first next step,** consider sharing your concerns with someone close that you trust. Professional assistance through your health plan, a clinician, peer support group, or the Placer County Law Enforcement Chaplaincy can help provide the relief you are seeking. The chaplaincy offers individual Situational Defusing and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings. Feel free to call our office for assistance.

- **24/7 Emergency Services: 530.889.5824**
- **Business Hours: 916.672.6984**

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS



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### CHECK YOUR MENTAL PULSE

**After reading through this brochure,** take a moment to assess your personal mental state. Think back through the recent stressful event(s) you experienced. Ask yourself whether you are experiencing any of the identifiable conditions, reactions or symptoms that are listed. Take this opportunity to write down your feelings and experiences in the space provided below. **Now,** is possibly the best time to do this assessment. The worst thing is not to do anything at all.

#### I am Experiencing:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

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