

# COMMON REACTIONS to A CRITICAL INCIDENT

You have been exposed to a traumatic event known as a critical incident. Here are some common signs and signals that others have reported when they have been exposed to such an incident. These are typical reactions to a traumatic event that can be experienced immediately, during, and/or following the event. These signs and symptoms usually appear in combination and may also be related to other stressors as well. This list is certainly not inclusive of all types of stress reactions but it is generally representative of the signs and symptoms typically associated with traumatic events. This list of common reactions is simply being offered here as a starting point for you to become more familiar with some of your own reactions to this particular incident. It should also be emphasized that no two people are likely to experience the exact same combination of reactions to any given stressor(s). Again, these are typical reactions and should be considered as normal responses by normal people when exposed to abnormal events. Additional support is available to help speed up your recovery.

Here are some common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>
chills	confusion	fear	withdrawal
thirst	nightmares	guilt	antisocial acts
fatigue	uncertainty	grief	inability to rest
nausea	hyper-vigilance	panic	intensified pacing
fainting	suspiciousness	denial	erratic movements
diarrhea	persistent intrusive images	crying	changes in social activity
vomiting	blaming someone	sadness	change in speech patterns
dizziness	poor problem solving	irritability	loss or increase of appetite
weakness	poor abstract thinking	depression	hyper-alert to environment
chest pain	poor attention/decisions	intense anger	increased alcohol consumption
headaches	poor concentration/memory	apprehension	change in usual communications
elevated BP	disorientation of time, place	emotional shock	change in usual habits
rapid heart rate	person	extreme agitation	etc...
muscle tremors	difficulty identifying objects or people	feeling overwhelmed	
shock symptoms	heightened or lowered alertness	loss of emotional control	
grinding teeth	increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	inappropriate emotional responses	
visual difficulties	etc...	extreme helplessness	
profuse sweating		etc...	
difficulty breathing			
etc...			

- Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation.  
When in doubt, contact a physician.

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*Note: If you find that these symptoms persist in such a way as to interfere with your ability to function at work, at school, and/or at home, you are strongly encouraged to contact a qualified healthcare professional for assistance.*

