



OCDE Crisis Response Network

Critical Incident Stress Information Sheets

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally.) Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or many experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passes through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. The understanding and the support of loved ones usually cause the stress reactions to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by himself.

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

Physical*	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chills thirst fatigue nausea fainting twitches vomiting vomiting dizziness weakness chest pain headaches elevated bp rapid heart rate muscle tremors shock symptoms grinding of teeth visual difficulties profuse sweating difficulty breathing etc... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confusion nightmares uncertainty hypervigilance suspiciousness intrusive images blaming someone poor problem solving poor abstract thinking poor attention/decisions poor concentration/memory disorientation of time, place or person difficulty identifying objects of people heightened or lowered alertness increased or decreased awareness of surroundings etc... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fear guilt grief panic denial anxiety agitation irritability depression intense anger apprehension emotional shock emotional outbursts feeling overwhelmed loss of emotional control inappropriate emotional response etc... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> withdrawal antisocial acts inability to rest intensified pacing erratic movements change in social activity change in speech patterns loss or increase of appetite hyperalert to environment increased alcohol consumption change in usual communications etc...

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