



WORKPLACE TRAUMA

— DEALING WITH CRITICAL INCIDENTS —

IN THE WORKPLACE

Traumatic events that cause stressful reactions are known as “critical incidents.” Common examples include community or natural disasters, serious injury or death of a co-worker, major organizational changes, and workplace violence, suicide or homicide.

Even though the event that happened at your workplace is over, you may be experiencing unusually strong emotions that interfere with your ability to work effectively or function at home. It’s very common, and quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks following such a stressful ordeal. Sometimes these reactions are felt immediately. Or, they may appear hours, days, even weeks or months later.

Critical incident stress is often so traumatic that people need professional assistance from a counselor to cope with it. This isn’t a sign of weakness. It’s normal, and simply means that the event was just too powerful for you to handle by yourself.

Recognizing Critical Incident Stress

Critical incidents may produce a wide range of symptoms that are unusual for you. Remember that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. The responses are different for each person, but may affect:

How You Think

- Poor concentration
- Shorter attention span
- Slowed problem solving
- Memory problems
- Difficulty making decisions

How You Feel Physically

- Headaches
- Chest or stomach pain
- Muscle tremors
- Difficulty breathing
- Elevated blood pressure

How to Help Yourself

Remember that you're normal and having normal reactions. Here are some ways you can help yourself cope:

- Give yourself permission to feel bad.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals.
- Don't "escape" with drugs or alcohol.
- Talk to people you trust, but don't feel that you have to talk if you don't want to.
- Realize that recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. They'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Hold off on making big decisions.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Returning to Normal

It may take longer for some people than others, but things will return to normal. Over time, you may find that:

- Completing daily tasks will become easier.
- Sleep and energy levels will improve.
- Feelings about the present and future will be more positive.
- The ability to enjoy life will return.

We offer you and your family confidential assistance to help you deal with a wide range of personal, health or work-related issues. These services help you manage stress, overcome anxiety or depression, and cope with grief or loss. Our EAP specialists are available any time, every day.

Real people. Real life. Real solutions.

Your Employee Assistance Program

800-886-9747

Or log on to liveandworkwell.com

Access code: Indiana

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