

Post Incident Stress

After exposure to an intense, unusual, or abnormal event (a critical incident), some people experience reactions that are out of the ordinary for them. This is not an uncommon experience. The event may create a stress response which can result in a disruption of physical and psychological processes. These reactions are normal. Often these reactions appear immediately after the event, but they may appear hours, weeks, or months later. Some of the more common reactions reported by disaster victims after involvement with a critical incident include:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>
nausea	anxiety	memory problems	withdrawal
intestinal upset	guilt	poor attention	restlessness
fatigue	denial	nightmares	emotional outbursts
rapid heart	fear	intrusive images	increased alcohol
muscle cramps	depression	hyper-alertness	avoidance
headaches	panic	loss of orientation	change in speech
chills	apprehension	poor problem solving	change in appetite
	disturbed thinking	poor decisions	increased startle reflex
		sleep disturbances	blaming others

This is not an inclusive list. Some people exposed to the same event may not suffer any affects and this is a normal reaction also. While these reactions can be alarming and unsettling, it is important to remember that these are normal reactions and that you are not unique to the experience.

Some things you can do to help speed up the recovery process include:

1. Eat - Even if you do not feel like eating, try to eat something that has nutritional quality. The stress reaction depletes energy levels so it is important that we restore these levels to keep the mind and body functioning normally. Try to stay away from caffeine and sugar.
2. Exercise - Regular is ideal to total health and well being, but it is especially important to get some type of physical exercise within 24 hours of the event and each day that symptoms persist. One suggestion may be a brisk walk. Exercise helps to reduce any stress chemicals in the system and helps to “clear the mind.”
3. Rest - Try to get plenty of rest. A common stress reaction is for people to try to “bury themselves in work or activity.” This can be self defeating physically and mentally. If you find your sleep is interrupted, get up and replenish yourself. You can do this a number of ways: a glass of juice or milk, something to eat if you have not eaten, read, watch TV, talk or write about your feelings. After a short period of time you should find that you are able to return to bed and rest more comfortably.

4. Talk - It is important to share your thoughts and reactions about the event. Suppression of thoughts and reactions may postpone or prolong the recovery process. Sharing is the mind's way of replenishing. It is also important to share your reactions with loved ones so that they may understand and assist in your recovery.
5. EFT, Emotional Freedom Techniques - This is a gentle tool that helps you shift self-defeating patterns of thought and behavior from past events or memories. To learn more please refer to the last page, "What is EFT?"

Things to try:

- WITH IN THE FIRST 24 - 48 HOUR period of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time - keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reactions - don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people - talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with over use of drugs or alcohol.
- Reach out - people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they're doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat - answer them even if you're not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Re occurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well - balanced and regular meals, (even if you don't feel like it).

For Family Members & Friends

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure the that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - traumatized people are not consoled.

Relaxation Techniques

I. Meditation

- Assume a comfortable position, close your eyes, concentrate on a single word, sound, phrase or image, and ignore all other thoughts.
- Practice 10 to 20 minutes, once or twice daily.

II. Tighten Muscles - Relax

- Sitting at a desk or meeting, tighten up some muscles, hold them that way for a few minutes, then let them relax. Wring a handkerchief.

III. Pushing

- Take a break. Push against a wall. Make some sound as you resist the wall.

IV. Yell

- Before you scream in your auto, make sure auto windows are pulled up. Start or finish your day with some robust screaming!

V. Find A Listener

- Find someone who will listen to you. Talk about your feelings. Also discuss positive events that occurred in the situation. Remember laughter as a release.

VI. EFT

- The process of tapping helps relieve and release stress and anxiety.

IN GENERAL

Exercise at least, three times a week, 20 - 30 minutes per workout; reduce cigarettes and caffeine intake; drink alcohol in moderation; attend to your diet and need for rest.

Take a lunch hour, AM and PM breaks. Listen to soothing music or a relaxation tape during breaks.

You Deserve Time For You

Sleep Problems

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THESE PROBLEM AREAS:

For difficulty getting to sleep:

1. Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate).
2. Make a list of what's on your mind.
3. Do some gentle stretching exercises before retiring.
4. Finish arguments before you try to go to sleep.
5. Pray or meditate.
5. Write in a daily journal or diary.
6. Avoid catnaps in the evening, (or afternoon).
7. Read a book or magazine.
8. Listen to relaxing music.
9. Try a relaxation/deep breathing exercise.

For waking up in the night:

1. Go over some of the techniques in the preceding section for "getting to sleep."
2. Get up and have a snack.
3. Keep a notebook to write in by your bed. Unload your feelings into it.
4. Allow yourself to stay up for an hour and enjoy the peace and quiet.
5. Imagine your thoughts rolling off the top of your head, down your side, and away from your body like a fountain.
6. Picture yourself sitting under a warm shower or waterfall, letting your cares be washed away for the time being.

For disturbing dreams:

1. When you wake with a disturbing or thought provoking dream, write it down.
2. Turn on the light, look around, and maybe get up in order to "shake" the intense feelings of the dream.
3. Picture your own ending to the dream.
4. If you need to "finish" a dream, concentrate on it before you go back to sleep as a way of setting the stage.
5. During the day, think about what your dreams might mean to you.
6. If you dream about loved ones who are no longer living, try to see your dream as a visit with that person.
7. When you are awake, remind yourself that you do have some power and control over what happens in your dreams.
8. With your repetitive dreams, notice the differences each time. Try to picture what you need to finish the dream.

For waking too early:

1. Get up and enjoy the day until you feel the need for a catnap.
2. Go to bed later so you can sleep later.
3. Put darker curtains over your windows.
4. Use a fan to drown out noise.

What is EFT?

Emotional Freedom Techniques, (EFT) is a gentle tool that helps you shift self-defeating patterns of thought and behavior from past events or memories.

EFT has been shown to be highly effective in addressing a variety of emotional as well as physical issues such as anxiety, stress, PTSD, headaches, pain, phobias and other issues. This tool is often called "acupressure" for emotions and has origins in ancient Chinese Medicine.

EFT makes the mind-body connection and is a powerful tool that calms the body. During an EFT sequence, we tap our fingertips on acupressure points on our face and body while tuning in to a problem that is bothering us. The tapping balances the energy around the negative thought and neutralizes the emotion. These tapping techniques work on the body's energy systems.

EFT : Emotional acupuncture without the needles

EFT Tapping Points

1. Top of Head
2. Eyebrow
3. Side of Eye
4. Under Eye
5. Under Nose
6. Above Chin
7. Collarbone
8. Under Arm
9. Liver Point
10. Karate Chop Point
11. Sore Spots
(Left and Right)



Emotional Freedom Technique Basic Recipe

1. Identify specific feeling or issue.
2. Write down, on a 0 - 10 scale how intensely the issue bothers you now.
3. Perform Set Up: While tapping on the "karate chop" point 3 times on either hand saying;
"Even though I have this (issue) I deeply and completely accept myself"
4. Tap each EFT point 7 times, then repeat process until intensity lessens.
5. Reassess intensity. If needed, get more specific or focus on a smaller aspect of the issue.
6. Repeat until the intensity is 0.

For results that are terrific, it's best to be specific!