

Newton Mental Health  
Post Incident/Bereavement Reaction

After exposure to an intense, unusual, or abnormal emergency service event (a critical incident), some persons experience reactions that are out of the 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 common reactions reported by emergency service provider 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	grief	poor attention	restlessness
Fatigue	guilt	nightmares	emotional outbursts
Rapid heart	denial	intrusive images	increased alcohol
Chest pains	fear	hyper-alertness	avoidance
Difficulty Breathing	depression	loss of orientation	change of speech
Shock symptoms	panic	poor problem solving	change in appetite
Muscle cramps	apprehension	poor decisions	increased startle reflex
Headaches	disturbed thinking		blaming others
Chills		sleep disturbance	

This is not an inclusive list. Some people exposed to the same event may not suffer any effects and this is a normal reaction also. While these reactions marked “\*” medical and/or psychological assistance should be obtained immediately.

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 especially important that we restore these levels to keep the mind and body functioning normally. Try to stay awake from the caffeine and sugar.
2. Exercise-Regular exercise 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- Ty to get plenty of rest. A common stress reaction is for people to try to “bury themselves in work or activity.” 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.

For Family Members, Friends, and Significant others:

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the traumatized person
- Offer your assistance and listening ear if they have not asked for help
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Help them with daily chores like cleaning, cooking, etc.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- Don't try to minimize the impact this is having on them. Don't tell them "it could have been worse" Traumatized people are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and that you want to understand and assist them.

For additional services you may access  
Newton Mental Health counselors on their  
24 hour Hotline at 973-383-0973

PTSD and grief/loss counselors in our community:

Joseph T Quinlan Bereavement Center, Newton – 973-383-0115

Partnership for Social Services, Dr. Thomasina Gebhardt, Franklin – 973-827-4702

Kathryn Griffiths, Newton – 973-257-5666

Charles Carroll, Sparta – 973-729-6333

Kris Imbrie, Sparta – 973-729-3722

Mark Imbrie, Newton & Milford – 973-579-4934

Lauri Petry, Newton – 973-903-1038