



Critical Incidents are those events that have the power to overwhelm our usually effective coping skills. Surviving natural disasters such as hurricanes, or man-made disasters such as acts of terrorism and criminal acts, can leave us feeling helpless, and disorientated. Sudden losses or events creating unexpected lifestyle changes, like a layoff, can equally be impactful. *When experiencing any of these types of events, if **our interpretations** were ones where we felt threatened, or those who are significant to us were threatened, we are likely to have a normal, but strong stress response.* One where our physiological survival skills are heightened in order to achieve safety from the threat.

Afterwards, the release of such powerful stress hormones may contribute in experiencing physical, emotional, psychological and behavioral reactions. **Our reactions to such events are normal** and in time, generally begin to fade away. For the majority of us, these stress reactions will not be as intense, but there may be some challenges in our journey to bounce back. If your interpretation of the event was life threatening, know that the reactions listed in the left hand column are **normal** and can be the after effects of such a powerful stress response. Using the tips that foster resiliency in the right hand column will aid in your return to a state of well-being.

Temporary Reactions to Traumatic Events

Physical Responses

- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite/stomach upset
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Increased heart rate

Emotional Responses

- Shock or numbness
- Anger toward others involved
- Fear/feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Guilt/frustration
- Sadness/loneliness

Psychological Responses

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering details of event

Behavioral Responses:

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry outbursts/ irritability/crying
- Decreased energy/ambition
- Marital/relationship conflict
- Increased use of alcohol or medications

Tips to Foster Resilience

- **Believe in your ability to bounce back.**
- Find your optimistic self!
- Know that any set back is temporary.
- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and resting when needed.
- Restore your sense of purpose.
- If you are on medication, continue on your prescriptions and schedule an appointment with your doctor.
- Seek out comfortable, familiar surroundings that promote a sense of safety.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful -It helps to talk or write about them and keep your mood clear.
- Work on beginning to accept what has happened.
- Give yourself time to rebound. It is not a good time to make a life changing decision.
- Set a forward thinking positive goal for yourself and/or family member.
- Return to or create daily routines for yourself and family.
- If you are spiritual, seek guidance.
- Find your sense of humor. It is helpful to laugh especially during challenging times.
- Consider consultation from a professional counselor if you feel stuck.
- **Commit to succeed! So many do.**
- **When ready, make this a growth experience.**

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