

## **Critical Incident Stress Information for Families and Close Friends**

Those who have been involved in serious accidents or other emotionally-charged events are likely to experience a wide-range of feelings often identified as *Critical Incident Stress*. It is common for normal coping mechanisms to be overwhelmed and the person affected feel like they are going “crazy” or are “out of control.”

The following information will help you assist your friend and those who are struggling through the aftereffects of a critical incident.

- 
- Critical incident stress symptoms may appear immediately, within hours, after a few days, or even after several weeks.
  - These symptoms will effect every area of your friend’s life - the way he/she thinks, feels (both physically and emotionally), and behaves. Don’t freak out!
  - Experiencing these symptoms is completely normal. Most people will recover completely with very little assistance.
  - Encourage your friend to talk about the incident - but do not pressure him (her). Talking is good medicine. Just listen. Don’t try to tell him his feelings are wrong; don’t attempt to correct what you think is “bad” thinking. Just listen and let them process their thoughts and feelings. You do not have to agree with or understand all they are saying. Just listen.
  - Do not get offended or angry at what your friend might say or do. Don’t take it personally.
  - Remember: “Any reaction to an abnormal situation is normal.”
  - Maintain a normal routine of life - or return to one as soon as possible.
  - Assist them with everyday tasks, such as washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking.
  - If the symptoms of stress that your friend is experiencing do not go away, or if they get worse, seek help. The person who gave you this form should be able to direct you to someone who will be glad to work with you.