

Perspectives®

CRISIS ASSISTANCE

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, Perspectives has put together this packet of information. Feel don't hesitate to use this information by reproducing it for your employees and/or their family members. We feel that it may be of assistance to your employees and/or their families. Whether you were directly effected by the terrible tragedy that occurred on that fateful day, the indirect effects have been extensive and far-reaching. The attack and subsequent aftermath has felt like a personal attack on all members of the American community. Like a family, we are all reeling and will need to undergo a long process of healing.

Many of the problems that have arisen are looked at on the following pages. Although no one can offer definitive solutions, we can provide you with some guidelines to help you and those close to you get through this painful time. Please remember that the effects of this type of tragedy will be there for a long time to come. Sensitivity and awareness of this fact will enable you to intervene appropriately with your specific work place. In the end however, do not hesitate to seek assistance. There are professionals available to assist you. Perspectives Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals are trained in providing you with services such as Critical Incident Stress De-briefings (CISDs), De-fusings, Humanitarian Assistance planning and training, organizational consultation and individual counseling for employees and/or family members.

Early intervention is always the best approach. If we can be responsive to the needs of our employees and assist them early on in the process, it will lead to a much more positive outcome. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. We can be reached at:

1 800 456 - 6327

or

www.perspectivesltd.com



CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

The following is a list of reactions that may occur in anyone following a traumatic incident.

1. Repetitive and intrusive thoughts about the incident.
2. Sadness, crying or depression.
3. Anxiety or tension.
4. Guilty feelings about what happened.
5. Problems with authority figures, rules regulations
6. More easily startled than usual, “jumpy”.
7. Difficulty concentrating.
8. Trouble remembering parts of what happened.
9. Sleep problems- trouble falling asleep, restless sleep, waking up early.
10. Nightmare or vivid dreams (often about the incident).
11. Feeling angry, easily irritated.
12. Lost interest in hobbies or social activities.
13. Using alcoholic beverages more than usual.
14. Feeling or acting as if the incident were occurring again, “flashbacks”.
15. Emotional numbness, hard to experience feelings at all.
16. More family problems than usual.
17. Feeling distant or emotionally cut off from others.
18. Deliberately trying to avoid thoughts or feelings associated with the incident.
19. Staying away from the things that remind you of the incident.
20. Being watchful or “on guard” for no reason.
21. Reacting physically to things that remind you of the incident, breaking out in a sweat.

Coping with Children's Reactions To Trauma

Fear and Anxiety

Fear is a normal reaction to any danger which threatens life or well being

After a disaster, a child may be afraid of:

A reoccurrence of the original event

Injury or death to self or loved ones

Being separated from family, or

Being left alone

Parents tend to "move on" once they are relieved that nothing serious has happened to the family

Adults need to remember the intensity of the child's fear

A first step for parents is to understand the kinds of fear and anxiety a child experiences.

Advice to Parents

It is very important for the family to go about normal activities

The child needs reassurance from the parents' words as well as actions

Listen to what the child tells you about any fears

Listen when he/she tells you about feelings and thoughts

Explain to the child, as well as you can, about the disaster and listen to the child

Fears do not need to completely disrupt a child's and the family's activities

Settling Down

Parents should indicate to the child that they are maintaining control; they should be understanding but firm, supportive and should make decisions for the child

It is nature for a child to want to be close to the parents and for the parents to want to have the child near them but normal activities lead to a more normal behavior

Parents should also be aware of their own fears and uncertainties and the effect these have upon children

Children respond to praise and parents should make a deliberate effort not to focus upon the child's immature behavior

How Can The Parents Recognize When to Seek Professional Help:

It is time to seek help if-

A sleeping problem continues for more than a few weeks

The clinging behavior does not diminish, or

Fears become worse

Mental health professionals are specially trained to help people in distress. They can help parents cope with and understand the unusual reactions of a child. By talking to the parents and the child, either individually or in groups, a child's fear can be overcome

Things To Do

Encourage questions and discussion realizing that none of us have the answers. The important part is open discussion of concerns and fears that can be brought to reality.

Encourage maintaining a "normal" routine as much as possible

End the day on a positive note, a reassuring hug, a demonstration of affection and one of comfort

Things Not To Do

Do not ignore children’s questions or statements of concern. They are real and need to be addressed even if you think you have already discussed them.

Discourage total immersion in the media blitz that is going on around us. Use diversion, movies, read to them, games, anything that provides periods of distraction.

If you or your family members require additional support, please remember that you can access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 24 hours a day for professional counseling and other resources. The EAP staff can be reached at 1(800) 456-6327.

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID AFTER A TRAGEDY WHAT TO EXPECT, WHAT TO DO, WHEN TO GET HELP

The feelings and reactions that follow a sudden loss are normal and natural responses to a traumatic event. You and others may experience some of these in the days and weeks after the tragedy. As we are all individuals, your particular responses and their intensities will differ from others, as will your own pace through the healing and recovery process. These reactions are generally temporary and not of great concern, though for some people, there may be on-going problems.

What You May Expect:

- ◆ Heightened startled reactions to noise, movement or other surprises
- ◆ Shock, numbness, confusion or disbelief
- ◆ Increase muscles tension and sensitivity to pain and minor irritations
- ◆ Wanting more physical contact with others, or wanting to withdraw further
- ◆ Discomfort being in places that seem unsafe to you
- ◆ Feeling isolated and desiring not being left alone
- ◆ Recalling past losses and traumas
- ◆ Emerging worries about the future
- ◆ Alternating feelings of guilt and relief
- ◆ Feeling excited and alive, or empty and depressed, or both intermittently
- ◆ Difficulty expressing anger or raging uncontrollably
- ◆ Fear for one's (family's) physical safety
- ◆ Intense dread when unable to ascertain whereabouts and safety of loved ones
- ◆ Religious or spiritual confusion
- ◆ Difficulty sleeping
- ◆ Changes in appetite or weight
- ◆ Reoccurring or intrusive recollections
- ◆ Desire to give you hope and abandon responsibilities
- ◆ Physical discomforts: flu-like symptoms, headaches, stomachaches, etc.
- ◆ Difficulties with concentration, memory, decision making, completing tasks
- ◆ Uncontrollable crying and sadness
- ◆ Overly convincing yourself that everything is "OK"
- ◆ Increased use of addictive substances or processes: alcohol, drugs, food, work
- ◆ Downplaying the severity of the event
- ◆ Feeling inadequate, helpless and vulnerable
- ◆ Other Symptoms?

**Special attention should be paid to children, frail elderly and the disabled, as these persons are at greater risk for intense and prolonged emotional distress.

Self-Help and Practical Things To Do:

- ◆ Talk to other people about your experiences, reactions, feelings, etc. (Don't feel embarrassed about a repetitious need to talk to people)
- ◆ Let others know if you have special needs: specific communication needs due to hearing or visual impairment, disability, medication, diet, etc., so that others are aware of them and can possibly assist you
- ◆ Write about your experiences via your journal or spontaneous writing
- ◆ Using drawing or other artistic medium to express yourself
- ◆ Record your personal experiences on cassette tape, incorporating a "talk show" or story telling format
- ◆ Continue to jot down your dreams if you keep a dream journal
- ◆ Practice Relaxation, meditation or prayer activities
- ◆ Take advantage of support groups, individual and family counseling that will be available through announcements in the newspapers, television and radio
- ◆ Exercise to reduce physical tension but take it easy and don't push yourself
- ◆ Plan extra time to perform unusual tasks
- ◆ Ask you friends about ideas of what they are doing to cope
- ◆ Focus on what you can do to help others in distress
- ◆ Recognize that you may be running on adrenaline:
 - ⇒ Plan to let yourself "crash" at some point
 - ⇒ Check to see if your decision-making ability has become impaired (ask for feedback on how you are doing)
 - ⇒ Let others do their part; you are not the only one who can do it!
- ◆ Review your current emergency plans with those close to you and prepare for future crises
- ◆ Resume familiar routines with familiar people and surroundings
- ◆ Remember to eat, and eat nutritional foods, drink fluids, get adequate rest and increase other self-nurturing activities
- ◆ Avoid denying that you feel stressed or out of control. Denial of feelings as their increased intensity. Continue "processing" your experiences as long as needed
- ◆ Recognize that we may be on different timetables, so don't expect others to handle things or be feeling the same way you do, or vice versa
- ◆ If you've experienced previous traumatic events, recall and use those personal strengths ns successful coping activities which helped you through the last one give you hope and
- ◆ Remember that you are not alone

When To Get Professional Help:

- ◆ When you or your family have any questions regarding what you are feeling
- ◆ If you notice any significant changes in family, work or school patterns
- ◆ Whatever your normal sleep is significantly disrupted, or if you are bothered by persistent sadness, irritability or nervousness
- ◆ If you are suddenly experiencing physical aches and pains, or the exacerbation or physical ailments (you might be expressing an emotional discomfort through your body)
- ◆ Call if substance abuse or other addictive processes increase
- ◆ Give yourself time to let the normal healing process unfold. If a gradual reduction in symptoms does not occur, call for further assistance

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

- People who witness or survive traumatic events may have periods when they alternate between anxiety and re-experiencing the incident and times when they are depressed and withdraw from family, friends, co-workers and usual or important activities. At some level these changes are normal and to be expected.
- Situations that strongly remind you of the incident may spark stress reactions. These could include returning to work, being in the area where the incident occurred, reading newspaper articles, watching the news, or being asked to retell the story.
- It is not uncommon for hearings, funerals or similar meetings related to the incident to bring on or increase stress responses.
- Anniversaries of the event may bring memories back and trigger stress responses.
- Families, friends and co-workers may also experience similar symptoms.
- People should not always assume they will “get over it” or that “life will return to normal”. Rather, a successful recovery from a traumatic incident means getting past, the incident and moving on with the changes it may bring.

SOME SUGGESTIONS AFTER A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

DON'T

- ◆ Drink alcohol excessively
- ◆ Use legal or illegal drugs to “numb yourself”
- ◆ Withdraw from your family and friends
- ◆ Stay away from work
- ◆ Reduce your leisure activities
- ◆ Look for easy answers
- ◆ Keep your reactions “bottled up”

DO

- ◆ Make sure that you get ample rest
- ◆ Maintain good eating and exercise habits
- ◆ Take the time for leisure activities
- ◆ Spend time with your friends and families
- ◆ Talk to your close friends and family about what happened and how you feel about it
- ◆ Expect the incident to bother you, sometime for quite a while

SOME NORMAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

There are some normal reactions we all may have after experiencing a traumatic event. Generally, these do not last long but it is common to feel bad, letdown or resentful after such an event. Many people who witness or survive a traumatic event will have at least one (or more) of the following responses:

- Being irritable, anxious or angry
- Being tired or lethargic
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Having nightmares
- Having flashbacks
- Being hyper-vigilant or “edgy”
- Being hyper-active or “jumpy”
- Some people may benefit from one or two sessions with a professional counselor, minister or other health professional just to sort through what has happened and their responses.
- Having trouble concentrating
- Being sad or “teary-eyed”
- Having headaches or nausea
- Having difficulty remembering
- Increase in alcohol or drug use
- Feeling numb or “not being present”
- Feelings of disbelief
- Feelings of disbelief
- If you find yourself extremely depressed, unable to function, becoming violent, unable to stop abusing drugs or alcohol, or feeling “out of control” – seek help immediately.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT FLASHBACKS

- **REMEMBER**-Flashbacks are normal after a traumatic incident. It is possible you may experience more flashbacks if you believe you are “going crazy” or “losing it”. Flashbacks will usually fade as you remind yourself that the incident is over and you are going to be ok.
- Flashbacks may often follow a “trigger.” A trigger is an event or thought that which reminds you of the traumatic incident. It is also possible that there is no obvious trigger, but there may be subconscious ones. These flashbacks can be scarier because they are harder to explain.
- Talk to yourself. When you have a flashback, remind yourself of the facts-that the incident is over and that you are going to be ok-different maybe, but ok. Try saying something like “I’m ok. I just had a really scary flashback, but its over (or it will be over soon) flashbacks are normal after an incident like the one I experienced.”
- Talk to others. Use your friends, your co-workers, your family and support systems. Seek the company of those who understand you and be accepting of what you are going through. Tell them about what you have experienced. Ask them to give you a break while you get through this sometimes difficult period. Ask them if you can “hang-out” with them or just talk if you need to.
- If flashbacks (or fear of flashbacks) are starting to interfere with your work, at home or other aspects of your life, consider seeking counseling from a qualified, experienced professional.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS REACTIONS

Over the next month you will experience normal reactions to the kind of experience you've had which may include:

Physical Reactions

Fatigue
Insomnia

Exhaustion
Health problems (such as change in appetite, headaches, digestive problems)

Behavioral Reactions

Hyperactivity
Difficulty with concentration
Inability to attach importance to anything other than this incident
Flashbacks

Under activity
Startle reactions
Memory disturbance
Isolating

Psychological Reactions

Fear with bureaucracy, violent fantasies
Guilt
Emotional sensitivity
Anger – seen via scapegoating, irritability, frustration

Anxiety
Depression
Feelings of helplessness
Amnesia for the event

These are normal reactions, and although painful, are parts of the healing process. There's not a lot anyone can do to make you not experience these uncomfortable feelings but there are things you can do to feel more whole.

Things to try:

- **WITHIN THE FIRST 24-48 HOURS**, periods 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 overuse of drugs or alcohol, you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out – people do care.
- Keep your lives as normal 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.
- The Nutrition Almanac recommends supplementing your diet with Vitamin C, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B6, Calcium and Magnesium.

THINGS THAT ARE HELPFUL DURING TIMES OF GRIEF

TIME

Time alone; and time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with the loss.

Rest- Relaxation-Exercise-Nourishments-Diversions

You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, and a “cause” to work for to help others—any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

Security

Try to reduce or find help for financial or others stress in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into the routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.

Hope

You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and time does help may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will be less raw and painful.

Caring

Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they maybe uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.

Goals

For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month helps you get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes you may need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction in your life. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.

Small Pleasures

Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures, as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food- all are small steps toward regaining your pleasures in life itself.

Permission to Backslide

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because as humans, we cannot take all of the pain and the meaning of death at once. So we let it in a little at a time.

Drugs Are Not Helpful

Even medication used to help people get through periods of shock under a physician's guidance may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way OUT is THROUGH.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Trying some of the following hints may help to alleviate the emotional pain associated with a traumatic event

For Yourself

- Try to rest a bit more
- Contact friends
- Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or periods for a day or so.
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even when you don't feel like it)
- Try to keep a reasonable level of activity
- Fight against boredom
- Physical activity is often helpful
- Reestablish a normal schedule as soon as possible
- Express your feelings as they arise
- Talk to people who love you
- Find a good counselor if the feelings become prolonged or too intense

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 them 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 tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" – traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist

If the symptoms described above are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, the traumatized person should seek professional help.

HOW TO HELP THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT (For Families and Friends of Trauma Victims)

1. Understand that emotional consequences follow a traumatic experience.
2. Don't expect that the person you care about will "get better" in a certain amount of time or in a certain way. Often recovery is a long and difficult process. If the person requires more time than you expected, you may feel frustrated or even angry.
3. Tell the survivor how you feel: that you are sorry they have been hurt.
4. Encourage the survivor to talk to you about how they feel. When they do, listen without interrupting or making judgments about what you hear. All survivors' feelings are OK even if you might not feel the same way.
5. Remind the survivor that their confusing emotions are normal.
6. Do not attempt to impose your explanation on why this has happened to the survivor. It probably won't be the explanation the survivor believes and imposing yours might hurt your relationship with them.
7. Do not tell the survivor "I know how you feel" or "Everything will be alright." Often, these statements are really efforts to relieve your own anxiety about how you feel about what has happened to the survivor. Survivors say that when they hear these statements they think that people do not care about or understand them.
8. Go to any court hearings, community meetings or other appointments that relate to the trauma. This is an important way to provide support to the survivor.
9. Be willing to say nothing. Just being there is often all that you can do to help.
10. Don't be afraid to encourage a survivor to ask for help in the form of post-trauma counseling. You might even go to the first appointment to show your support and concern.

WORDS THAT HURT

"You just need to have more faith."
"Just draw close to God."
"God sent this tragedy to reach you."
"God knows best."
"This is God's will."
"Maybe you have sin in your life."
"God doesn't make mistakes."
"God only takes the good."
"I know just how you feel."
"You don't need to feel that way."
"Don't cry."
"You must be strong for the sake of your children."
"Everything will be all right."
"Time heals all wounds."
"Be brave."
"Every cloud has a silver lining."
"You'll get over it."
"If you look around, you will find lots of people who are worse off."
"You should be over this by now."
"You've got to pull yourself together."
"Just try a little harder."
"Make yourself more attractive; a fine person will come and sweep you off your feet."
"If there's anything I can do, just call me."

Words That Heal

"I am sorry."
"I love you."
"I am here with you."
"I am available."
"I am praying for you."
"I am listening."
"I feel so bad."
"I feel so helpless."
"I share your sorrow."
"God cares."
"I think God is crying too."
"Go ahead and cry – I'll cry with you."
"Life is sometimes very difficult."
"It is all right to cry."
"It is okay to be angry."
"I know you are hurting now."
"Words fail me."
"What are you feeling right now?"
"How may I help you?"