

A **Critical Incident** is any traumatic event that is outside the usual range of human experience. These events have the potential of causing traumatic stress reactions that may impair cognitive, emotional, spiritual or physical function. *These reactions are a normal response to an abnormal situation.*

Examples of Critical Incidents include:

- Trauma to someone you know
- Several critical events over a period of time
- Lengthy extrication effort or scene time
- Fire death
- Suicide
- Serious trauma or death to a child
- Mass casualty incident or disaster
- Use of deadly force
- Line of duty death

WAYS FOR YOU TO RESPOND TO THE STRESS REACTION

- Within the first 24 to 48 hours, periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time – keep busy.
- Talk to people – talk is the most healing medicine.
- Beware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol. You don't need to complicate the stress with substance abuse.
- Reach out – spend time with others.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal. Write your way through any sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize that those around you also are under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible. This 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 are not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

WAYS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO RESPOND TO YOUR STRESS REACTION

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and listening ear if (s)he has not asked for help.
- Reassure him that he is safe.
- Help him with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding the children.
- Give her some private time.
- Don't take her anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell him that he is "lucky it wasn't worse". The traumatized person is not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell him that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist him.

REMEMBER...

- You are normal and having normal reactions to an abnormal event – don't label yourself crazy.
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. Don't try to fight them. They will decrease over time and become less painful.

TO ACTIVATE

the Chequamegon
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team
for Debriefing or Defusing –

CALL the
Bayfield County Communications Center
715-373-6120

- Request call back from the Coordinator of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team
- Provide your
Name
Telephone number(s)
Service affiliation
- Give a brief description of the critical incident including location

A Team Coordinator will return your call and request additional information related to the critical incident including...

- Agencies involved
- Ongoing point of contact
- Potential meeting times
- Potential meeting locations

After organizing a team the coordinator will confirm the time for the debriefing or defusing with your “point of contact”.

Only those emergency services personnel who were directly involved with the incident should attend.

Any emergency services provider
may activate the team

The Chequamegon Area Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team is made up of mental health and emergency services personnel who have had special training. This team volunteers to provide services designed to help individuals and groups cope with normal reactions to unusual events...in an effort to retain trained personnel as well as prevent stress related death and disease.

Types of services include:

- **Education** – Continuing education can be offered to emergency services personnel that provides an overview of emergency services stress and healthy ways of coping with stress.
- **Defusing** – A group meeting or discussion for a small team of people who normally work together; designed to “defuse” the stress responses of a critical incident; usually held within the first 3 hours after the critical incident.
- **Debriefing** – A group meeting or discussion open to all response personnel designed to mitigate the impact of the critical incident and accelerate the recovery process – usually held after the first 24 hours and within 72 hours of the critical incident.
- **Referral** – The Chequamegon Area CISM team maintains a list of resources in the region familiar with working with personnel who experience emergency services stress.

For more information contact
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Critical Incident Stress Debriefing



*Peers working
together
taking care of
each other*

Chequamegon Critical Incident
Stress Debriefing Team

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