



TRAUMATIC EVENTS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a traumatic event (an injury, loss of a loved one or property, a serious threat, or any overwhelming emotional experience). You may be experiencing some strong reactions. This is very common and it is in fact quite **normal** for people to experience aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months. Occasionally, depending on the severity of the traumatic event, these may last much longer. With understanding and the support of loved ones the stress reactions may pass more quickly. Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply weakness or “craziness.” It simply indicates that the particular traumatic event was just too powerful for the person to manage alone.

Here are some very common signs and symptoms of a stress reaction in a traumatized person:

<u>Physical *</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>	<u>Spiritual</u>
Chills	Confusion	Fear	Withdrawal	Anger at God
Thirst	Nightmares	Guilt	Antisocial Acts	Withdrawal from
Fatigue	Uncertainty	Grief	Inability to Rest	Faith Based
Nausea	Hyper vigilance	Panic	Intensified Pacing	Community
Fainting	Suspiciousness	Denial	Erratic Movements	Feeling Abandoned
Twitches	Intrusive Images	Anxiety	Change in Social	By God
Vomiting	Blaming Someone	Agitation	Activity	Finding it hard to Pray
Dizziness	Poor Problem Solving	Irritability	Change in Speech	No Yearning for
Weakness	Poor Attention Span	Depression	Patterns	Righteousness
Chest Pain	Poor Decision Making	Intense Anger	Change in Appetite	No Spirit of
Headaches	Poor Concentration	Apprehension	Hyper alert to	Thankfulness
Elevated BP	Poor Memory	Emotional Shock	Environment	Sense of Hopelessness
Rapid Heart Rate	Disorientation x3	Emotional Outbursts	↑ Alcohol Use	Devaluing Scripture
Muscle Tremors	Heightened or	Feeling Overwhelmed	Change in Usual	
Shock Symptoms	Lowered Alertness	Loss of Emotional	Communications	Crisis of Faith -
Teeth Grinding	Change in awareness	Control		<i>When your normal,</i>
Visual Difficulties	Of surroundings	Inappropriate		<i>established relationship</i>
Profuse Sweating		Emotional Response		<i>with God and Accom-</i>
Difficulty Breathing				<i>panying theological</i>
				<i>“worldviews” seem</i>
				<i>violated</i>
Etc...	Etc...	Etc...	Etc...	Etc...

If the symptoms described above are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, you may need professional counseling. Contact a private practice psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker or your local community mental health center or health department for assistance.

** Any of these physical symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation. When in doubt, contact a physician.*

In the meantime, treat your body well. By doing some of the following your body and mind will have a chance to begin healing.

- Eat nutritional foods and do not skip meals even if you don't feel like it.
- Take a walk or participate in some other exercise.
- Talk with a family member or a close friend and try to spend a few hours each day with someone.
- Express your feelings as they arise.
- Do not try to fight reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks. They are normal and should decrease in time and become less painful.
- Maintain your normal sleeping schedule.
- Read a good book or listen to some uplifting music.
- Take time to worship.
- Fight against boredom.
- Refrain from excessive use of alcohol and nicotine.
- Spend some time with one of your hobbies.
- Find a good counselor if the feelings become prolonged or too intense.

Helpful hints for family members and friends:

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance. Do not wait to be asked.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Do not take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Express only understanding and encouragement. Avoid statements that will minimize the event or their reactions to the event.

Please be aware that while there are times when stress reactions can arise from a single event, they can also occur after a series of events over a longer period of time. A reaction to an event can also be more acutely experienced when there are other seemingly unrelated problems at home or at work. This is called **cumulative stress** and the symptoms listed can be triggered by what under usual circumstances would not be considered a critical event.

♥ The work you do is important and demanding. Please don't forget to take care of yourself while taking care of others.

The information on this sheet is based on the works by Jeffrey T. Mitchell, PhD, of the University of Maryland's Emergency Health Services Program.

Any questions concerning this information can be directed to the Critical Incident Stress Management Team of the Peninsulas EMS Council, Inc. (804) 693-6234.