

# Critical Incident Stress Information Sheet for Significant Others

Your friend/family member has been involved in an emotionally charged, traumatic event, often known as a *critical incident*. He or she may be experiencing normal stress responses to this incident.

## Important Things to Remember About Critical Incident Stress

- The signs of critical incident stress are physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.
- Critical incident stress responses can occur right at the scene or within hours, days, or even weeks of the event. The person may now experience a variety of signs/symptoms of a stress response or s/he may not feel any of the signs at this time.
- Suffering from the effects of a traumatic event is completely normal. Your loved one is having a normal reaction to an *abnormal* event. Your loved one is not the only one suffering; others who shared the event are probably experiencing similar reactions.
- The symptoms will normally subside and disappear in time.
- All aspects of our lives (personal, professional, family, etc.) overlap and influence each other. The impact of a critical incident can be intensified or lessened by other personal, professional, or family issues...past or present.
- Encourage, *but do not pressure*, your loved one to talk about the incident and his/her reaction to it. Even if you don't completely understand what your friend or family member has experienced, you can still offer your love and support. Your primary role is to listen and be supportive.
- Remember that children may also be affected. Talk with them. Encourage them to express their concerns. Answer their questions honestly and directly. Provide reassurance.
- Expect that life will go on. Return to a normal routine as soon as possible.
- If the signs of stress your loved one is experiencing do not begin to subside within a few weeks or if they intensify, consider seeking further assistance from a professional.

