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**Staff & Faculty Consultation Center**

**Critical Incident Stress Information**

Following a tragic or traumatic event, people often experience a range of reactions that cause changes in how people feel physically and emotionally, and in their ability to think clearly and process information. **Although these experiences are distressing, it is important to understand that these are all part of a normal response to a very abnormal or unusual situation.** Not everyone will have the same symptoms, or have any one symptom to the same degree as others. Research has shown that it is often helpful to survivors of trauma to know what to expect when they experience this situation.

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

The signs and symptoms of a stress of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With the understanding and the support of loved ones, stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Sometimes the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular trauma was just too powerful to manage without help.

**Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:**

**\**Definite indication of the need for medical evaluation!***

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| **PHYSICAL** | **EMOTIONAL** | **COGNITIVE** | **BEHAVIORAL** |
| Fatigue | Anxiety | Blaming someone | Withdrawal |
| Nausea, vomiting | Guilt | Confusion | Emotional outbursts |
| Muscle tremors | Grief | Attention problems | Suspiciousness |
| Chest pain\* | Denial | Poor concentration | Inability to rest |
| Difficulty  breathing | Loss of emotional control | Difficulty making  Decisions | Loss or increase of appetite |
| Rapid heartbeat | Fear | Memory problems | Difficulty sleeping |
| Thirst | Uncertainty | Changes in alertness | Pacing |
| Blurred vision | Depression | Hyper vigilance | Startle responses |
| Weakness,  dizziness | Panic  attacks | Trouble problem-solving | Alcohol  consumption |
| Grinding of  teeth | Feeling  overwhelmed | Poor abstract  thinking | Hyper alert to environment |
| Sweating | Anger | Intrusive images | Antisocial acts |
| Chills | Irritability | Disturbed thinking | Altered speech |
| Fainting | Agitation | Nightmares | Change in routines |
| Symptoms of  shock\* | Inappropriate emotional response  (giddy, silly) | Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people | Changes in sexual  functioning |

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