

Information for Family Members and Friends Who Experienced the Same Traumatic Event (critical incident): How to Help each other

- ☞ Trauma symptoms, also called critical incident stress responses, can be physical, cognitive (thinking), emotional, spiritual, and behavioral.
- ☞ They can occur right at the scene, within hours, days, or even weeks.
- ☞ You and your loved ones may experience a variety of signs/symptoms of a stress response, or you may not feel any symptoms at this time.
- ☞ Suffering from the effects of critical incident stress is completely normal. Other persons are having the same or very similar reactions.
- ☞ Symptoms will often subside and disappear in a few days. Some may linger or reappear briefly for a week or more. Talk about what you are feeling and thinking. Listen as other friends or family talk. Listening and talking help to heal the trauma.
- ☞ If the signs of stress you and your loved ones are experiencing do not begin to subside within approximately seven days, or if they intensify, consider seeking further assistance. Find a professional who understands trauma and how it can affect individuals.
- ☞ Dealing with trauma takes enormous energy. As soon as appropriate, return to normal routines, and do familiar things with your loved ones. This provides reassuring structure. Find the delicate balance between taking time to grieve, and affirming by your actions that life goes on.
- ☞ All phases of our lives overlap and influence each other: personal, professional, family, etc. The impact of trauma, or critical incident stress, can be intensified, influenced or lessened by personal, family, and other current issues. Other issues from the past may come up at this time – this is normal.

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