



Eastern Carolina

Critical Incident Stress Management Association

Stress at Work

Stress is an avoidable reality that has positive and negative consequences. It can help you get organized to deal with deadlines or overwhelm you and leave you with multiple health consequences. Everyone is affected by stress due to your personality, career field, changes in your life and the real world issues of health, age, financial status and general satisfaction with life. Do you have any of the following?

Physical Signs

Fatigue
Tension headaches
Upset stomach
Sleep problems
Backaches
Weight
Muscle tension
Change in appetite
Sweaty palms

Emotional Signs

Irritability
Hostility
Anxiety
Low self-esteem
Helpless feelings
Isolation from family & friends
No joy in life
Poor concentration
Substance abuse

The information included in this booklet is to offer some suggestions to deal with stress. Call the Eastern Carolina Critical Incident Stress Associations for more information at 1-800-545-7781.

Traumatic Events Information Sheet

You have experienced a traumatic event (an injury, loss of a loved one or property or a serious threat, or any overwhelming emotional experience). Even though the event may be complete, you may be experiencing or may experience later some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience aftershocks when they have passes through a horrible event.

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 reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer. Depending on the severity of the traumatic event, professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that a particular traumatic event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

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

Physical

Nausea
Tremors (lips, hands)
Upset stomach
Feeling uncoordinated
Profuse sweating
Chills
Diarrhea
Chest Pains
Rapid Heartbeat
Rapid breathing
Increased blood pressure
Headaches
Muscle aches
Sleep disturbance

Thinking

Slowed thinking
Difficulty making decisions
Difficulty in problem solving
Confusion
Disorientation
Difficulty calculating
Difficulty concentrating
Memory problems
Difficulty in naming common objectives
Seeing the event over & over
Distressing dreams
Poor attention span

Emotional

Anxiety
Fear
Guilt
Grief
Depression
Sadness
Feeling abandoned
Feeling Isolated
Worry about others
Wanting to hide
Wanting to limit contact with others
Anger
Irritability
Feeling numb
Shocked

Traumatic Events

Helpful Hints

Trying some of the following hints may help to alleviate the emotional pain associated with a traumatic event.

- *Try to rest
- *Contact friends
- *Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or periods of a day or so
- *Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal, don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- *Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- *Eat well-balanced and regular meals(even when you don't feel like eating)
- *Try to keep a reasonable level of activity
- *Fight against boredom
- *Re-establish a normal schedule as soon as possible
- *Express your feelings as they arise
- *Talk to people who love you
- *Find a good counselor if the feelings become prolonged or too intense
- *Listen carefully
- *Spend time with the person
- *Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help
- *Reassure them that they are safe
- *Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children
- *Give them some private time
- *Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse"- traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

If the symptoms described above are severe or if they last longer than six weeks, the traumatized person may need professional counseling.

The Ten Greatest Stress Tips on Earth

1. Get organized – Clutter and disorganization rob you of energy, overwhelms your emotions and creates stress.
2. Live in the present – All too often people drag around the guilt and anger of their yesterdays and add the fear of their tomorrows. The past you can learn from and you can prepare for tomorrow. Guilt, anger and fear only serve to rob you of energy and create stress.
3. Look inside yourself and help others. People often become so preoccupied with their own issues that they fail to recognize that there are other people who have struggles and challenges that exceed their own. Help someone else and receive an emotional blessing.
4. Laugh! You can find some humor in nearly every problem, that is if you can get beyond feeling sorry for yourself or blaming others. Lighten up!
5. Let others do their own thing in their own way. There is more than one road even though you may like the fastest or the most direct route. Everyone is unique and special. Respect diversity.
6. Give others a break. Everyone can have a bad day and the world is not perfect. Trying to straighten out others only serves to create additional stress for both of you!
7. Monitor self-talk that goes on in your head. All too often negative self-talk creates a sense of pessimism that demoralizes and defeats before you can even get started. Don't put yourself down and be your own worst enemy.
8. Use positive language and names for task. Call problems challenges and deadlines finish lines to promote a sense of optimism in your life.
9. Remember, people and things cannot make you angry, only you can do that. You are responsible for your emotions and actions.
10. Treat yourself right! Exercise, eat a balanced diet, get enough rest, and on a daily basis be alone with your thoughts. Stop smoking and watch you caffeine intake. Life gets better!

The above suggestions are a compilation of suggestions offered in the video "The 10 Greatest Stress Tips on Earth", (The Hope Heart Institute)