

Critical Incidents.... What Every Person Should Know

This handout is designed to help students, parents, and staff realize the possible affects a critical incident can have on them physically, emotionally, and behaviorally. Its purpose is not to provide you with all reactions you might experience, but to provide you with possible reactions.

It is important to understand what a Critical Incident is. A Critical Incident is any event or crisis that causes a disruption in your ability to function. Examples of a critical incident may be: a natural disaster like a flood, fire or earthquake. It could also be the sudden death of family member, a suicide or tragic automobile accident.

Each person reacts to such stressful situations differently. Below are some *normal responses* you may experience after a critical incident.

Physically

- ✓ Nausea
- ✓ Shock
- ✓ Dizziness
- ✓ Excessive sweating
- ✓ Increased heart rate
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Muscle tremors
- ✓ Rapid breathing
- ✓ Sleeplessness

Cognitively

- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Hyper activity
- ✓ Disorientation
- ✓ Poor concentration
- ✓ Impaired thinking
- ✓ Inability to make decisions
- ✓ Seeing the events over and over
- ✓ Distressing dreams
- ✓ Blaming others

Emotionally

- ✓ Denial
- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Feelings of guilt
- ✓ Overwhelmed
- ✓ Apathy
- ✓ Grief
- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Hopelessness
- ✓ Numbness

Behaviorally

- ✓ Changes in routine
- ✓ Crying
- ✓ Loss of interest
- ✓ Inappropriate humor
- ✓ Withdrawal
- ✓ Outbursts of Anger
- ✓ Changes in Eating habits
- ✓ Increase in smoking /drinking
- ✓ Avoiding reminders of incident

Spiritually

- ✓ Loss of faith
- ✓ Questioning events
- ✓ Reflection on your life events
- ✓ Loss of sense of security

OTHER REACTIONS YOU NOTICE IN YOURSELF (LIST)

Remember these *ARE NORMAL RESPONSES* to a crisis or critical incident. You may experience some or all of the responses listed above. It is *OKAY* if you don't have any responses. Each person deals with a critical incident in their own way and should not be made to feel bad if they do not experience much emotion.

If you need support in dealing with the critical incident contact your principal, the school counselor, parent or another trusted adult you feel comfortable talking with.

Cape Flattery School District # 401
Box 109
Sekiu, WA 98381

Additional Resources:

National Center for PTSD- (802) 296-5132- www.ncptsd.org

Self-Help for managing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Federal Emergency Management Agency- (800) 462-9029- www.fema.gov

Information on counseling available

National Institute of Mental Health (888) 826-9438- www.nimh.nih.gov

Information on PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders and coping strategies for adults, children and adolescents.

American Psychological Association- (800) 964-2000- www.apa.org

Information on coping with PTSD- depression and terrorism

*Information taken from December 2001 issue of Consumer Reports- Page 60

Local Resources:

West End Outreach Services- (360) 374-6177 or after hours (360) 374-6271

Counseling for children and adults

Peninsula Community Mental Health Center- (360) 457-0431

Counseling for children and adults

New Growth Behavioral Health Services- (360) 457-1610

Counseling for children and adults

Critical Incidents... What Every Person Should Know

Cape Flattery School District # 401
Box 109
Sekiu, WA 98381