



Critical incidents in the workplace

Traumatic events that cause stressful reactions are known as “critical incidents.”
Here’s what you should know.



Common examples include community or natural disasters, serious injury, death of a co-worker, major organisational changes, and workplace violence, suicide or homicide. Critical incident stress is often so traumatic that people need professional assistance from a counselor to cope with it.

This isn't a sign of weakness. It's normal, and simply means that the event was just too powerful for you to handle by yourself.



There are a variety of resources available to yourself and loved ones at

Our Critical Support Centre offers emotional support resources and information when you need it most. Find a variety of topic areas including mental health, traumatic events, natural disasters, grief and loss, supporting adolescents in crisis and more.



Recognizing critical incident stress

Critical incidents may produce a wide range of symptoms that are unusual for you. Remember that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. The responses are different for each person, but may affect:

How you think

- Poor concentration
- Shorter attention span
- Slowed problem solving
- Memory problems
- Difficulty making decisions

How you feel physically

- Headaches
- Chest or stomach pain
- Muscle tremors
- Difficulty breathing
- Elevated blood pressure

How you feel emotionally

- Depression
- Grief
- Guilt
- Anxiety or fear
- Feeling lost or overwhelmed

How you behave

- Excessive silence
- Social withdrawal
- Changes in sleep and eating habits
- Lower work performance



How to help yourself

Remember that you're normal and having normal reactions. Here are some ways you can help yourself cope:

- Give yourself permission to feel bad.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals.
- Don't "escape" with drugs or alcohol.
- Talk to people you trust, but don't feel that you have to talk if you don't want to.
- Realise that recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. They'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Hold off on making big decisions.
- Ask for help if you need it.



Positive steps forward

With time, you may be able to:

- Complete daily tasks more easily.
- Improve sleep and energy levels.
- Have more positive feelings about the present and future.

You and your family have access to confidential assistance to help deal with a wide range of personal, health or work-related issues. These services help you manage stress, overcome anxiety or depression and cope with grief or loss. Our EAP specialists are available any time, every day.



Real people. Real life. Real solutions.

To access specific benefits information visit [Livewell.optum.com](https://livewell.optum.com) and log in with your company access code:



Call for Support at

Your Optum benefit offers support from specially trained, mental health specialists to help anyone who is overwhelmed, depressed or searching for answers.



Critical support when you need it

Visit optumeap.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.



*If you're pregnant, physically inactive or have a health condition like arthritis, diabetes or heart disease, check with your GP before starting an exercise programme or increasing your activity level. They can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe for you.

This programme should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 999 or go to the nearest A&E (accident and emergency). This programme is not a substitute for a GP's or professional's care. Consult your GP for specific health care needs, treatment or medication. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g. employer or health plan). This programme and its components may not be available in all areas or for all group sizes and is subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

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