



BENTON COUNTY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

The mission of the Benton County Crisis Response Team is to provide timely critical incident stress management services to individuals, groups and organizations to lessen the immediate and long-term adverse effects of a crisis.

TO ACTIVATE THE BENTON COUNTY CRISIS
RESPONSE TEAM PHONE (541) 766-6911
24-HOUR NUMBER

TEAM MEMBERS

Kevin DeCoster, MSW, Counselor, Greater Albany School District
Marta DeCoster, Administration, Corvallis School District
Marcia Gilson, Paramedic and EMS Officer, Philomath Fire and Rescue
Patti Kenyon, Registered Nurse, Albany Samaritan Hospital
Paulette Ratchford, MA, Public Safety Manager, Oregon State University
John Reiman, PhD, Mental Health Professional & Mediator



STRESS: WHAT IS IT?

Stress response is normal. It is the body's natural response to meet a physical and/or emotional challenge.

Severe traumatic situations lead to increased stress in people's lives. *Critical incident stress* is a *normal reaction to an abnormal situation* experienced by normal people. Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives.

TYPES OF STRESS

1. Everyday Stress
2. Critical/Acute Stress
3. Delayed Stress

4. Accumulative Stress/"Burn-Out"

1. **Everyday Stress:** Any event acting as a stimulus that places a demand on a person, group, or organization.
2. **Critical/Acute Stress:** Any situation in which a person experiences unusual or extreme emotional reactions that interfere with their ability to function normally.
3. **Delayed Stress:** A suppressed reaction to a critical incident or combination of several critical incidents which manifests itself at a later time. These reactions can be as severe as an acute stress reaction.
4. **Accumulative Stress/"Burn-Out":** A collection of physical and/or emotional stressors that in time takes its toll on a person's ability to cope with life's irregularities—"Burn-out" is an exhaustion of normal stress coping mechanisms.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS:

PHYSICAL

appetite changes
headaches *
chest pain *
tension
Fatigue
difficulty sleeping
weight change
increasing colds *
muscle aches *
pounding heart *
rash *
foot/finger tapping
increased alcohol use
increased drug use
increased tobacco use

INTELLECTUAL

forgetfulness
dulled senses
poor concentration
stuttering
fogginess
low productivity
negative attitude
confusion
lethargy
loss of creativity
boredom
continuous daydreams
negative self-talk
poor job performance

* SEE YOUR PHYSICIAN

EMOTIONAL

anxiety
frustration
short temper
apathy
mood swings
depression
nightmares
crying spells
irritability
depression
easily discouraged
easily startled
stoical

RELATIONAL

feeling isolated
intolerant of others
resentful
loneliness
any relationship problems
lashing out at others
marriage problems
social withdrawal
lowered sex drive
nagging
anti-social behavior
lack of intimacy

SPIRITUAL

feeling of emptiness

doubt in religious beliefs
feeling unforgiven
spiritually lonely
looking for magical solutions
loss of purpose of life
needing to prove self worth
cynicism about life

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

A critical incident is any situation in which people experience an unusual or extreme emotional reaction that interferes with their ability to function normally. Many people exposed to a critical incident will experience noticeable symptoms (although not necessarily dysfunctional ones) within 24 hours. Some people may not experience any adverse symptoms—this is normal and not worrisome, too.

CRITICAL STRESSORS INCLUDE:

- ✧ Death of a co-worker
- ✧ Death of a child
- ✧ Injury or death to someone close
- ✧ Mass casualty
- ✧ Serious threat or injury to self
- ✧ Incidents with heightened media interest
- ✧ Prolonged emotional or physical incident

CRITICAL STRESS HEIGHTENERS:

- ✧ Fatal motor vehicle crash
- ✧ Fire
- ✧ Suicide/Homicide

ACUTE/CRITICAL STRESS REACTIONS:

- ✧ Memory loss
- ✧ Muscle tremors/twitches
- ✧ Nausea or gastro-intestinal upset
- ✧ Anxiety—overwhelming feelings
- ✧ Profuse sweating or chills
- ✧ Dizziness
- ✧ Shock symptoms
- ✧ Multiple emotions (simultaneously)
- ✧ Nightmares

ACUTE/DELAYED STRESS INDICATORS:

- ✧ Intrusive images
- ✧ Fear of repetition: re-living the event
- ✧ Physical symptoms
- ✧ Emotional symptoms
- ✧ Personality change

BRIEFINGS, DEBRIEFINGS, DEFUSINGS

It has been found that individual or group interventions can assist individuals that may be feeling they are unique

or alone in their reactions to a stressful event. Briefings, debriefings and defusings are information-providing meetings and/or facilitated discussions with persons involved in critical incidents. The goal of these meetings is to provide factual information about the event, identify emotional and physical effects, provide useful stress-education information and dispel feelings of abnormality. These meetings are not therapy or a substitute for therapy; they are informational, emotionally ventilating and educational sessions with a specially trained peer team consisting of mental health professionals and peer support. The goal is to help individuals normalize their reactions to Critical Incident Stress.

AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Good mental health and stress management requires a commitment to your health and wellbeing. Below are basic stress management principals that can help you moderate stress effects:

- ✧ Use relaxation techniques-deep breathing , “4x4 breathing”
 - Four second *inhalation*
 - Four second *pause*
 - Four second *exhalation*
 - Four second *pause*
- ✧ Eat nutritiously: fresh fruits, vegetables, fiber
- ✧ Exercise to reduce the physical effect of stress trauma and to relax, help you sleep
- ✧ Stay rested—keep on a sleep schedule
- ✧ Find a support source—someone to talk to
- ✧ Avoid alcohol and other depressants as a means of relaxing
- ✧ Recognize when your stress is overwhelming and in need of expert intervention
- ✧ Avoid changes in your routine

The concept of stress management is a process of dealing with tension and anxiety caused by stress. Learning to relax, especially during stressful times, requires practice. A balance of good nutrition, exercise and relaxation will strengthen personal coping mechanisms while also reducing the effects of chronic stress. Stress prevention comes through good mental health habits, understanding stress and recognizing when coping mechanisms have fallen short or failed. It is idealistic to think anyone’s lives could be stress-free, therefore if you are experiencing extraordinary signs and symptoms of stress we encourage you to contact someone knowledgeable in stress management.