

Guidelines for Next 24 Hours

- Get Plenty of Rest
 - Drink no alcohol
 - Eat healthy foods in moderate amounts
 - Talk to spouse, family, friends and other affected co-workers.
 - Make no big decisions
 - Get exercise, and preferably a rigorous workout.
- ## General Guidelines
- Accept your symptoms as a warning sign of emotional overload.
 - Simplify tasks whenever possible.
 - Ensure proper rest and nutrition.
 - Avoid self medication, including drugs and alcohol
 - Reduce time spent with persons or tasks that stress you.
 - Seek professional help if symptoms persist.



Stress Management Plan

Professional Track

Discuss thoughts and feelings about your work with a close friend, your spouse, or your parents.

Cut down on the amount of work you take home with you.

At the end of the day, take 15 minutes to mentally review the day and make plans for the next day.

Personal Track

Meditate, pray, or simply relax, in a quiet spot, with your eyes closed for two separate periods of 10-20 minutes each day.

At home, finish projects you've been putting off.

By phone or in person, visit and chat with 3 friends you have not seen in a long time.

Find the time and money to take a course or workshop not directly related to work.

Physical Track

Do an alternating tensing and relaxing exercise and stretching for 3 minutes 3-4 times a day.

Start an exercise program you can adhere to at least 3 times a week for 30-40 minutes each. (See your doctor first)

Cut out all sugar and salt in your diet and limit coffee, tea and alcohol to one drink a day.

Get plenty of rest - the amount that is right for you.



Critical Incident Stress Information for Participants

**Tidewater Emergency Medical Services
Council, Inc.**

CISM Team

General Information and Workweek Team requests
(757) 963-0632

Night/Weekend Team Requests (757) 622-1309

General Information E-Mail:
tidewater@vacms.org

On the Web at:

<http://tidewater.vacms.org/cism.html>

Critical Incident Stress Management—CISM

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident. A critical incident is any event that causes people to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later. You may be experiencing, or may later experience, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It's very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible or very stressful event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reaction appears.

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. With understanding and the support of loved ones, and with the appropriate stress management techniques, the stress reaction usually passes more quickly.

Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage himself or herself.



What is a CISM Team?

Your local CISM Team consists of mental health leaders and volunteers from the area police, fire, rescue, and emergency services departments.

These volunteers have received extensive training on how to conduct these interventions.

The Tidewater EMS Council, Inc. provides a platform for these volunteers to help their fellow police, fire, EMS, communications and hospital personnel, as well as their families, deal with the traumatic and cumulative effects of stress from the unique jobs they perform.

CISM is a comprehensive system developed to help normal people deal with abnormal events.

The team uses several types of interventions depending on the critical incident and the emergency worker's needs:

One-on-One: Brief discussion to help individual deal with impact of stressful event.

Debriefing: An informal small group discussion. Goal is to mitigate the impact of the event.

Debriefing: Seven-step process used to facilitate restoration of normal function.

RECOGNIZING STRESS

Cognitive

- Poor Concentration
- Memory Problems
- Poor Attention Span
- Difficulties with Calculations
- Difficulties Making Decisions
- Slowed Problem Solving

Emotional

- Loss of Emotional Control
- Depression
- Guilt
- Grief
- Anxiety/Fear
- Feeling Lost/Overwhelmed

Physical

- Muscle Tremors
- Chest Pains
- Gastro-Intestinal Distress
- Difficulty Breathing
- Headaches
- Elevated Blood Pressure

Behavioral

- Excessive Silence
- Sleep Disturbed
- Unusual Behaviors
- Changes in Eating Habits
- Withdrawn from Contact