

## Critical Incident Stress Management

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a program designed to provide peer support and healthy life choices in response to stressful work environment incidents.

CISM is a process designed to lessen the overall impact of acute or cumulative stress and to accelerate recovery in people who are having normal reactions to abnormal events.

Any incident, regardless of the type, may be defined as “critical” if unusually strong emotions are generated in the people involved, for example:

- Line of duty death or serious injury
- Employee suicide or unexpected death
- Significant events involving children
- Traumatic events including disasters
- Exposure to grieving public
- Extended negative media exposure

The CISM Team provides information about critical incidents and stress reactions that employees can use to help identify healthy life choices. The team provides an atmosphere of concern and caring as well as identifying personal options for dealing with stress including:

- Pre-incident and stress education
- Confidential on-scene group interventions.
- Confidential one-on-one support and individual interventions.
- Emergency mobilization and demobilization
- Post visit follow-up
- Employee Assistance Program referral

## Critical Incident Stress Prevention Tips

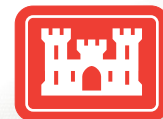
- Strenuous physical activity coupled with relaxation reduces some reactions to stress
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it)
- Take rest breaks
- Do activities you enjoy
- Keep your life as routine as possible
- Confide in someone you trust
- Structure your time; keep busy
- Limit exposure to sights, sounds, and odors
- Share your feelings with co-workers and be aware of their feelings.
- Give yourself permission to react, don't try and hide your feelings
- Talk to people, they do care – talk can be the most healing medicine
- Avoid alcohol and drug use



For more information, please contact the National Operations Center

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Visit our Gateway Site at [corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.html](http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.html)



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## What is Stress

Have you experienced an incident that caused unusually strong emotional reactions? Have you ever felt overwhelmed by job stressors?

These reactions, if not addressed, have the potential to interfere with your ability to function either at work or at home.

Although the event may be over, you may experience some very strong physical or emotional reactions. It is very common for people to have aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks appear immediately. Occasionally they appear hours or days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before stress reactions occur.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last days, weeks, or longer depending on the severity of the event.

With the understanding and the support of peers, stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor is necessary.

The CISM Peer Supporter cadre consists of Corps employees from all fields who have undergone special training to help you.

## Signs and Symptoms of Stress

These signs are temporary and should go away with time. If these continue or interfere with your home or work life, please contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your family doctor and/or your clergy or minister.



Intellectual Symptoms: Your Mind	Emotional Symptoms: How You Feel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>• Inability to concentrate</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Seeing only the negative</li> <li>• Repetitive or racing thoughts</li> <li>• Poor judgment</li> <li>• Loss of objectivity</li> <li>• Desire to escape or run away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moody and hypersensitive</li> <li>• Restlessness and anxiety</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anger and resentment</li> <li>• Easily irritated and "on edge"</li> <li>• Sense of being overwhelmed</li> <li>• Lack of confidence</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Urge to laugh or cry at inappropriate times</li> </ul>
Physical Symptoms: Your Body	Behavioral Symptoms: Your Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Digestive problems</li> <li>• Muscle tension and pain</li> <li>• Sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Chest pain, irregular heartbeat</li> <li>• High blood pressure</li> <li>• Weight gain or loss</li> <li>• Asthma or shortness of breath</li> <li>• Skin problems</li> <li>• Decreased or increased sex drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in eating habits</li> <li>• Sleeping too much or too little</li> <li>• Isolating yourself from others</li> <li>• Neglecting your responsibilities</li> <li>• Increased alcohol and drug use</li> <li>• Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)</li> <li>• Teeth grinding or jaw clenching</li> <li>• Overdoing activities such as exercising or shopping</li> <li>• Losing your temper</li> <li>• Overreacting to unexpected problems</li> </ul>
Spiritual Symptoms: Your Soul	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger at God</li> <li>• Loss of meaning and/or purpose</li> <li>• Sense of isolation from God</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger at clergy</li> <li>• Questioning beliefs</li> <li>• Withdrawal from place of worship</li> </ul>

