



Coping with a critical incident

A team member's guide

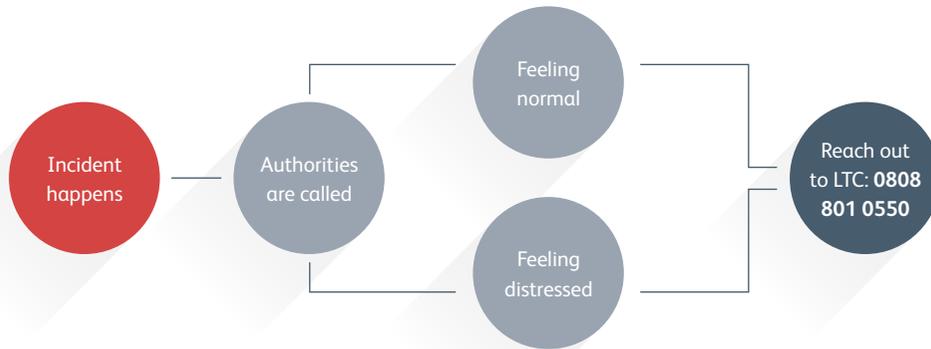
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The Licensed Trade Charity are working in partnership with Care First to provide guidance, advice and support for those who have experienced the trauma of a critical incident.

This guide outlines ways to recognise the emotional and physical impact of the incident and coping mechanisms to help you recover. Through Care First, The Licensed Trade Charity provide 24/7 expert support – 365 days a year. If at any point you feel vulnerable or anxious, do not hesitate to contact them on **0808 801 0550** or email enquiries@ltcharity.org.uk



What is normal

Everyone is different and deals with trauma in different ways – but the following symptoms and aftereffects of a critical incident are very common. Some of these feelings may be confusing and you could have different feelings at different times.

Feeling distress: This is the brain's natural response to trauma as it processes the events. You may feel more anxious and distressed when you think of the incident, tell someone else about the incident or go back to the site where it happened. Things may seem worse at night or when you are on your own.

Feeling numb: You may find it difficult to engage with your emotions, and lose your interest in people and activity.

Feeling guilt: That you didn't do more at the time and that perhaps others suffered more than you.

Feeling angry: You may feel angry towards people in authority, towards those you consider responsible, towards people who can't understand what it was like, and perhaps with yourself for

not doing more at the time and you may feel you could have prevented it from happening.

Feeling helpless: Being emotionally overwhelmed and powerless to resolve the situation.

Feeling profoundly sad: You may feel sad about losses of every kind, injuries or tragic deaths.

Being fearful: You may fear the same thing happening again or not be able to control your emotions or just feel out of control.

You may also experience physical symptoms such as:

- Exhaustion
- Sleep patterns – either too much or too little
- Appetite – either a significant increase or decrease
- Loss of sexual interest
- Compromised immune system – feelings of nausea and/or diarrhoea
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tension and headaches
- Irritability

It is also normal to feel worse at night or when you are on your own. Don't feel pressure to have to pull yourself together as you will experience lots of feelings, maybe at different times, and although this may feel scary it is quite normal after a traumatic incident.

Coping mechanisms

Focus on your own personal needs, and don't try and achieve too much. If it helps break things down to smaller easier goals.

Below are a few recommendations on how you can look after yourself and ease your way down the road to recovery.

The groundwork

- Take it easy for a while – until you feel ready for the next step
- Get plenty of rest and sleep
- Spend time with your support network
- Avoid extra alcohol – it tends to make symptoms worse
- Take more care and time over the simple things – accidents tend to happen when your mind is distracted

Moving forward

- Return to your regular routine and activities as soon as you feel ready
- Be open and prepared to share with your support network
- Discuss the incident with other people involved – mutual support can be very cathartic
- Make a note of the times you feel better – this helps show you when your symptoms are less acute and that you are on the road to recovery

A few tips for a healthy mind and body

- Go for a walk, bike ride or a jog. It relieves stress and can be a social way of keeping fit
- Drink more water
- Drink less coffee, tea and alcohol
- Cut down/quit smoking
- Set and stick to regular sleep patterns

Remember...

Recovery may take some time, there will be times when memories are triggered again, and you may have a setback. Hopefully the triggers will come less often and feel less serious. Getting back into a normal routine will help you take your mind off things. You may feel guilty for trying to get on with your own life, but don't as it will help you heal.

Reach out

If you feel at any point in the process that you are struggling, or that time is not healing, then reach out for professional help. Speak in complete confidence to one of our helpline team – they are professional counsellors and you can speak to them about anything that may be troubling you. Our lines are open 24 hours a day – 7 days a week, 365 days a year: 0808 801 0550.



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Care first

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