

STRESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Listed below are some things you can do to mitigate the effects of stress reactions. This information was taken from several sources associated with the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, to which NZALPA CIRP is an accredited programme.

For Yourself

- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Exercise is always important, but vigorous exercise is especially important within the first 24-48 hours of an accident or incident to offset the physiological stress reactions. Move around, stretch, and walk. Alternate relaxation techniques like deep breathing with exercise.
- Realize that those around you especially your family - may be Under stress, too. Talk to them about what is going on with you.
- Structure your time, keep busy, and follow your routines of eating, sleeping, exercise, time with family, etc.
- Have someone stay with you for at least a few hours or even a day or so.
- Reduce your use of caffeine and alcohol. Both interfere with normal sleep and processing of the accident/incident or trauma.
- Take naps or just rest. Get more rest than you usually do.
- Contact friends and talk to people that you trust. This is the most healing action you can take. Talk about your reactions to the event and its "impact" on you.
- Eat healthy foods and snacks even if you are not hungry. Eat regular meals.
- If you can not sleep after a few days, call the NZALPA office Or your PSV for help. Sleep is critical in recovery.
- Drink lots of fresh water.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Express your feelings as they arise.
- Do not make big life changes or major decisions.
- Make as many small, daily decisions as you can which will give you a feeling of control over your life.
- Recurring thoughts, intrusive memories of the event, flashbacks are normal - don't try to fight them - they will decrease over time and become less painful.

For Family Members and Friends

Share the following information/suggestions with those close to you:

- Offer your assistance and realize the traumatized person may not know what he or she needs or wants.
- Listen carefully without offering advice. Don't try to "fix" the situation.
- Don't take the traumatized person's anger or other feelings personally.
- Be prepared for mood swings. People experience trauma and cope with aftermath in different ways. Respect this.
- Give the traumatized person private time.
- Help them with everyday tasks. Most people will not call and ask for help.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worst" - traumatized people are not consoled by such statements. Instead tell the person that you are so sorry that such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.
- Create an environment that feels safe to share in. Don't attempt to force the traumatized person to talk if they don't want to.
- Keep "curious questions" for your own self satisfaction in their appropriate place. A later time might be more beneficial to everyone.
- Don't try to analyze the behaviors that may become apparent. Acceptance and support are the key elements of providing comfort.
- Be sensitive to the fact that pre-established routine sometimes help to reorient the individual to prior functioning levels.
- A sensitive touch, a caring embrace or someone to sit quietly nearby may also be supportive as individuals sift through some of their own issues.
- We cannot make grief less painful, often a simple, "I'm sorry" is enough.
- Most of the time a barrage of help is available immediately after a traumatic event; but as the days and weeks go on, your friend or peer may need your help even more. Stay in touch!
- Resist telling people how they should feel and try to let them know you have heard how they do feel.
- Call for help for yourself when you feel overwhelmed - this program is designed to also help family members and significant others.