

## For Family and Friends

- Listen Carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, especially the children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

## For Children

- Encourage children to talk. Listen to their concerns without belittling them.
- Calmly provide factual information about the disaster and share plans for insuring their ongoing safety. Remember, children vary in the amount of information they need and can use.
- Involve children in updating your family disaster plan and disaster supply kit.
- Practice your plan.
- Involve children by giving them specific tasks to let them know they can help restore family and community life
- Spend extra time with your children.
- Re-establish daily routines for work, school, play, meals. and rest.

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## Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplain Information Sheet

### Critical Incident Stress Management

You have experienced a traumatic event which has caused you to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with your ability to function. Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite *normal*, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible 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. And, in some cases, weeks, or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

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 the stress reactions usually pass 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 that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.



## Things to Try:

Common Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction				
Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Spiritual
chills	confusion	fear	withdrawal	anger at God
thirst	nightmares	guilt	antisocial acts	anger at clergy
fatigue	uncertainty	grief	inability to rest	belief that God is powerless
nausea	hyper-vigilance	panic	intensified pacing	belief that we have failed God
fainting	suspiciousness	denial	erratic movements	believing God is not in control
twitches	intrusive images	anxiety	change in social activity	believing God doesn't care
vomiting	blaming someone	agitation	change in speech patterns	church rituals seem empty
dizziness	poor problem solving	irritability	loss or increase of appetite	familiar faith practices seem empty (prayers, scriptures, etc.
weakness	Poor abstract thinking	depression	hyper alert to environment	feeling distant from God
chest pain	poor attention/decisions	intense anger	increased alcohol consumption	loss of meaning and purpose
headaches	poor concentration/memory	apprehension	change in usual communication	sense of isolation (from God, church members)
elevated BP	disorientation of time, place, or person	emotional shock		sudden turn toward God
rapid heart rate	difficulty of identifying objects or people	emotional outburst		questioning one's beliefs
muscle tremors	heightened or lowered alertness	feeling overwhelmed		etc....
shock symptoms	decreased awareness of surroundings	loss of emotional control		
grinding of teeth	etc...	inappropriate emotional response		
visual difficulties		etc...		
profuse sweating				
difficultly breathing				
etc....				

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- Within the First 24-48 Hours, periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation, will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time — keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reactions— don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people – talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol, you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out—people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by **sharing feeling rotten and** sharing feelings and checking out how to see how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life. **ie.**, If someone asks you what you want to eat, answer them even if you are not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Don't try to fight reoccurring thoughts, dreams, or flash-backs—they are normal and will decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well balanced and regular meals (even if you do not feel like it).

