

# Taking Care of Ourselves and Each Other During Challenging Times:

During (and after) a “critical incident”, it is essential that we remain aware of our own response and the responses of others. Through supportive coworkers, prepared managers, open and strong leadership, readily-available resources, practical coping strategies and action-focused counseling via the EAP; recovery after a critical incident can be successful. Personal and organizational health can be fully restored. Please keep in mind the common signs and symptoms that may affect our students, our colleagues, our employees, our leaders and ourselves. Refer to community and campus resources when you see signs of distress.

## Common Signs of Stress and Cumulative Stress Reactions

Typically, individuals will experience a variety of the following normal reactions to what is perceived as a critical incident. Here are some common signs of stress reactions:

Physical*	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Diarrhea and other GI symptoms</li> <li>• Fainting</li> <li>• Rapid heart rate</li> <li>• Rashes/Hives</li> <li>• Sleep difficulties</li> <li>• Visual difficulties</li> <li>• Profuse sweating</li> <li>• Breathing difficulties</li> <li>• Weakness</li> <li>• Thirst</li> <li>• Exacerbation of pre-existing medical conditions</li> <li>• Tremors (lips and hands)</li> </ul> <p><i>*Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation. When in doubt, contact a physician.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Agitation</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Wanting to hide</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Depression –thinking &amp; judgment errors, missing things, feeling scattered, memory and concentration issues, and/or sadness</li> <li>• Tearfulness</li> <li>• Over sensitivity; frustrated more easily</li> <li>• Inability to focus or focusing on the “micro” level when the “macro” level is needed too</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Feeling vulnerable and/or helpless</li> <li>• Anger – This may be manifested by: scapegoating, resentment, cynicism, violent fantasies, frustration with lack of information</li> </ul>
Behavioral	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Excessive silence</li> <li>• Inability to rest</li> <li>• Excessive humor</li> <li>• Increased alcohol consumption</li> <li>• Withdrawal; social isolation</li> <li>• Antisocial acts</li> <li>• Change in interaction with others</li> <li>• Change in speech patterns</li> <li>• OTC drug use and misuse</li> <li>• Prescription drug use and misuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily distracted</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Disorientation of person, place or time</li> <li>• Difficulty with concentration</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>• Difficulty calculating</li> <li>• Rumination</li> <li>• Intrusive images</li> <li>• Flashbacks</li> <li>• Blaming</li> <li>• Hypervigilance</li> <li>• Difficulty with solving problems</li> <li>• Distressing dreams</li> </ul>