

# You are *not* alone.

[www.ctcism.org](http://www.ctcism.org)

24-hour number:  
1-800-734-2473



Even during these difficult times; while dealing with COVID-19, we are available

## What is a critical incident?

An event outside the range of normal experience that is sudden and unexpected, disrupts one's sense of control, involves the perception of a life threat, and may include elements of physical or emotional loss.

While a critical incident may occur anywhere or at any time, Emergency Responders are at increased risk of exposure to psychologically traumatic events.

## Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

The purpose of CISM is to provide a safe opportunity to deal with emotional reactions to a stressful, traumatic event. Two types of intervention are:

### 1. Defusing

- A group or individual meeting of those involved, directly after the event.

The purpose of CIS Defusing is:

- To allow those involved to tell what happened and to talk about their reactions and feelings.

- To allow a CISM Defuser to provide information about normal stress reactions, available support services, and details of a possible follow-up debriefing.

## 2. Debriefing

- A group meeting of those involved, 24 to 72 hours after the event. This will typically include a mental health professional from our team.

The purpose of CIS Debriefing is:

- A process designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident.
- A structured intervention by specially trained members of a Critical Incident Stress Team.
- An organized group meeting that allows and encourages those involved in a Critical Incident to openly discuss their thoughts and reactions in a safe, non-threatening environment.
- Ideally takes place 24 to 72 hours after the Critical Incident.

## What is critical incident stress?

- A normal reaction to an abnormal event.
- The unusually strong physical and emotional reactions experienced in the face of a critical incident that could interfere with one's ability to function during or after the event.



24-hour number:  
1-800-734-2473

## A strong reaction is normal.

Few remain unaffected by a critical incident although individual reactions may differ. Some reactions are immediate and some may occur days, even weeks later.

## Reactions may be:

- Physical - Nausea
- Cognitive - Thinking
- Emotional - Feeling

## Common Immediate Physical

### Reactions:

- Nausea
- Muscle tremors
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Chills
- Rapid heart rate
- Increased blood pressure

## Common Delayed Physical

### Reactions:

- Fatigue
- Increased use/misuse of alcohol and drugs
- Easily startled

## Sleep-Related Difficulties:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Nightmares
- Night sweats
- Restlessness
- Waking up unusually early

You are  
*not* alone.