

# Northern New York Critical Incident Stress Management Team

REMSCO 120 Washington St Suite 230 Watertown, NY 13601

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You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function). Even though the event is over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reaction. It is common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through an event. Sometimes the emotional aftershocks or stress reactions appear immediately after the event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before 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 event. With the understanding and support of loved ones the stress reaction usually passes more quickly. Occasionally the event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply weakness. It simply indicates that the event was just too powerful for the person to manage by himself or herself.

## **Common Signs and Symptoms of Stress reaction:**

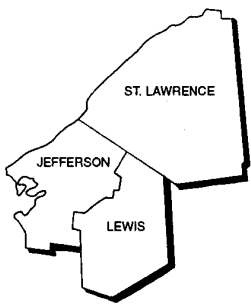
**Physical:** (May need to see a physician) Chills, thirst, nausea, fainting, twitches, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, chest pain, headaches, elevated blood pressure, rapid heart rate, muscle tremors, shock symptoms, grinding teeth, visual difficulties, profuse sweating difficulty breathing, etc.

**Cognitive:** Confusion, nightmares, uncertainty, hyper-vigilance, suspiciousness, intrusive images, blaming someone, poor problem solving, poor abstract thinking, poor attention/decision, poor concentration/memory, disorientation of time, place or person, difficulty identifying objects or people, heighten or lowered alertness, increased or decreased awareness of surroundings, etc.

**Emotional:** Fear, guilt, grief, panic, denial, anxiety, agitation, irritability, depression, intense anger, apprehension, emotional shock, emotional outburst, feeling overwhelmed, loss of emotional control, inappropriate emotional response, etc.

**Behavioral:** Withdrawal, antisocial acts, inability to rest, intensified pacing, erratic movements, changes in social activity, changes in speech patterns, loss or increase of appetite, hyper-alert to environment, increased alcohol consumption, change in usual communications, etc.

**Spiritual:** Anger at God, questioning of basic beliefs, withdrawal from place of worship, faith practices and rituals seem empty, loss of meaning and purpose, uncharacteristic religious involvement, sense of isolation from God, anger at clergy, etc.



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## **THINGS TO TRY:**

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

## **FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY:**

- Listen carefully
- Spend time with your responder
- Offer your assistance even if they have not asked for help
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Assist with everyday tasks i.e. cleaning, cooking, mowing, etc.
- Give them private time
- Don't take their angry words or feelings personally
- Don't tell them they are "luck it wasn't worse"
- Don't share your own stories

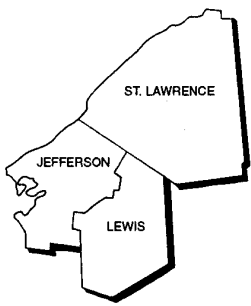
**If you think you or your loved one needs assistance, please contact the NNY CISM Team, we will be happy to help.**

To Activate the NNY CISM Team

Jefferson 315-786-2601

Lewis 315-376-3511

St Lawrence 315-379-2240



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All these resources are here to help any time someone may need them. They are free for use, and confidential.

## Safe Call Now – 1-206-459-3020

A 24/7 help line staffed by first responders for first responders and their family members. They can assist with treatment options for responders who are suffering from mental health, substance abuse and other personal issues.

## Fire/EMS Helpline – 1-888-731-3473

Also known as Share The Load. A program run by the National Volunteer Fire Council. They have a help line, text based help service, and have also collected a list of many good resources for people looking for help and support.

## National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255 or 988 Military press 1

The national (USA) suicide hotline. Not first responder specific, but they can and will talk to anyone who needs help. We've been told by one of their founders they have many first responders and veterans who volunteer.

## Copline (Law Enforcement Only) – 1-800-267-5463

A confidential helpline for members of US law enforcement. Their website also has additional information on help and resources.

## Frontline Helpline – 1-866-676-7500

Run by Frontline Responder Services. Offer 24/7 coverage with first responder call-takers.

## Code Green Campaign Resource Page – <https://codegreencampaing.org/>

Web-based resource and education to help ease the stigma of mental health in First Responders.

## NYS DOH EMS Resource page – [https://health.ny.gov/professionals/ems/mental\\_health](https://health.ny.gov/professionals/ems/mental_health)

A collection of resources by the NYS DOH. Offering reasons for reaching out, varied resources for providers to reach out to and other mental health resources.

## NYS LEAP – <https://www.nyleap.org>

24/7 outreach contact numbers and they provide Post Critical Incident Seminars throughout the state.