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Critical Incident Reactions

After being involved in an intense, unusual or abnormal event (a critical event), you may experience reactions that are out of the ordinary for you. This is not an uncommon experience. The event may create a stress response which can result in changes in your usual physical or emotional reactions. These reactions are *normal*. Often they appear immediately after the event, but they may appear hours, weeks or months later. Some of the more common reactions reported by individuals after a critical incident include:

Physical	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral
Nausea	Anxiety	Memory problems	Withdrawal
Intestinal upset	Grief	Poor attention	Restlessness
Fatigue	Guilt	Nightmares	Emotional outbursts
Rapid heart	Denial	Intrusive images	Increased alcohol
Chest pain*	Fear	Hyper-alertness	Avoidance
Difficulty breathing	Depression	Loss of orientation	Change in speech
Shock symptoms	Panic	Poor problem solving	Change in appetite
Muscle cramps	Apprehension	Poor decisions	Increased startle
Headaches	Disturbed thinking	Sleep disturbance	reflex
Chills		Flashbacks	Blaming others

*Seek medical attention

This is not an inclusive list. Some people exposed to the same event may not suffer any effects at all and this, too, is a normal reaction. While these reactions can be alarming and unsettling, it is important to remember that you are not losing your mind or "falling apart." These are normal reactions normal people experience after an abnormal event. The intensity and frequency of the reactions usually decrease after one to three weeks.