

Seeking support

It is normal to feel anxious about how children and young people will cope after a critical incident. We sometimes feel that the help of professionals should be sought immediately after the death or event.

It is important however, to remember that we all have natural ways of coping when a critical incident happens and that intervening **too** early may disrupt these normal coping skills.

There are times when specialised help is necessary. If you have concerns about a child or young person's ability to cope after a critical incident (4 - 6 weeks), always share these with the appropriate colleagues in your school. This is to ensure timely communication with parents and possible referral to the relevant sources of support.

Remember self care!

- ☆ Be aware of your own feelings
- ☆ Seek support from someone you know and trust
- ☆ Find time for yourself
- ☆ Build in treats for yourself
- ☆ Give and receive support, praise and encouragement
- ☆ Learn to say 'no'

For further support you can contact the following 24/7 free and confidential helplines:

Inspire Workplaces—Wellbeing at Work

0808 800 0002

Lifeline

0808 808 8000



Produced by the EA
Critical Incident Response Team

When a Critical Incident Happens



What school staff can do to help

This leaflet may help you as a member of school staff to understand your pupils' reactions to a critical incident. It will also show how you can help to facilitate **normal healing** over time.

Each individual's experience of a critical incident can differ. A consistent whole staff approach is necessary for an effective school response to a critical incident. As adults in close and regular contact with pupils you are key to supporting them and have a vital role to play in helping to maintain stability, routine and structure in a familiar environment at the time of crisis.



Children and young people will reflect your reactions, it is therefore important for staff members to respond in a calm, caring and confident manner.

Normal feelings and emotions in response to traumatic events may include:

Shock, denial, sadness, anger, fear, guilt, despair and anxiety or appearing not to be feeling anything at all.

Children and young people may also feel tired, lack concentration, be unable to sleep and may experience other physical symptoms, such as nausea, headaches, feeling cold and loss of appetite.

The event may trigger memories of other losses in a child or young person's life. Some may display avoidance behaviour by keeping busy or appearing reluctant to talk about what has happened.

It is important to accept that things just can't be made better in a short space of time, however with the understanding and support of significant others, these reactions usually pass more quickly.

Things you can do to help!

- ☆ Acknowledge the reality of the critical incident and demonstrate your willingness to talk about it
- ☆ Be available, observant and listen to the pupils
- ☆ Communicate clearly and factually using age appropriate language and explanations
- ☆ Be patient - you may have to repeat things - offer 'bite size' pieces of information
- ☆ Be honest, answer any questions clearly and simply and remember it is all right to say "I don't know"
- ☆ Share your own feelings, if appropriate
- ☆ Acknowledge the child/young person's feelings
- ☆ Be encouraging and reassuring
- ☆ Expect regressive behaviours such as fear of being left alone

