

CRITICAL INCIDENT WELLBEING GUIDE

A support guide for Surf Life Saving NSW members and staff involved in critical incidents.



NEW SOUTH WALES

Reactions following an incident

People are affected differently by critical incidents. If you are involved in a critical incident in Surf Life Saving you may experience some, none, or all of the responses below. For most, these responses are short-lived and will subside within a few days or weeks:

- Avoiding reminders of event, such as the place it occurred, or people involved
- Constant negative thoughts and feelings

- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Displaying anger and irritability or sweating
- Being easily startled, constantly vigilant or highly strung
- Withdrawal from friends and family or a loss of motivation
- Feeling low and / or tired all the time
- Changes in appetite, sleep, weight
- Increased alcohol or drug use

Coping strategies

Recovering from critical incidents doesn't mean forgetting your experience or not feeling any emotional pain. Recovery means reducing your distress and increasing your ability to cope over time. Ways you may cope and look after yourself after exposure to an incident include:



Recognise you have been through an extremely stressful event and it is normal to have an emotional reaction to it



Don't bottle up or block out your thoughts and feelings. Recurring thoughts, dreams and flashbacks are unpleasant, but they are normal, and will decrease with time



If you feel like it, talk about your feelings to someone you trust. This may help you to process what has happened



Try to plan one enjoyable or meaningful activity each day



Get plenty of rest (even if you can't sleep), regularly exercise and eat regular, well-balanced meals



Even if you don't want to talk about your experience, spend time with people you care about. It's also okay to want to be alone at times but avoid isolating yourself



Get back to your normal routine as soon as possible, but take it easy. Don't do activities just to avoid painful thoughts or memories of the incident



Make time for relaxation

Coping strategies

If you've tried these strategies and things still aren't improving after a couple of weeks, or if you are having trouble coping with work or with relationships – please seek further support.

Lifeline
13 11 14

MensLine Australia
1300 78 99 78

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800