

# American Behavioral



## Critical Incident Stress Debriefing



# Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

When the workplace experiences a traumatic event, it is common and normal for employees to exhibit a wide-range of emotional and physical reactions. Sometimes the incident produces such strong emotional response that an individual's ability to cope may be temporarily overwhelmed. Such responses can impact job performance, including productivity and absenteeism. To assist employees in processing their reactions to the situation and to reduce performance concerns, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) services telephonically, as well as onsite. Services may be requested as group or one-on-one consultations, referrals to community and professional resources, as well as follow up services. The following information will guide you through the **CISD** process.

- Call American Behavioral's designated CISD line at **1-800-925-5327, option 4** to be connected to a CISD Coordinator.
- **Report details of incident.** Please be prepared with details of the event:
  - the location address
  - primary and secondary contact persons (with phone numbers)
  - the date and time you are requesting a debriefing
  - number of employees involved
  - details about the incident
- Once details are gathered, American Behavioral will coordinate an onsite provider. (please note that arrival of response can take up to 2 hours). An immediate debriefing is often not advisable. The latest information from the Critical Incident Stress Management organizations indicate that a debriefing is generally more effective if it is conducted a few days following the event. The initial reaction of most employees is to leave the work place and return to the safety of their homes and family.
- The HR contact/designated contact will be notified once a provider has been coordinated. The contact will be given the providers name and expected time of arrival. The provider will also make contact with the site representative prior to arrival, when possible.
- After the response has taken place, the CISD coordinator will provide a brief CISD report to site representatives.
- Place provider in a private setting for the debriefings, with enough room for a group or one-on-one session.

# COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

Grieving is a healthy and natural healing process. It is not a sign of weakness. For most people, grieving follows a pattern, which proceeds through a series of stages.

The best way to confront loss is to recognize it, understand the feelings and reactions you experience, and get support during the grieving process.

## Tips for Coping With Grief

- Take your time. Don't judge or measure your reactions by those of others.
- Talk, share your feelings and the meaning this loss has for you.
- Pay attention to your body's needs. Exercise (according to your doctor's recommendations) and balanced nutrition are essential.
- Surround yourself with friends and family who love and support you. Avoid isolating.
- Tears may come unexpectedly and at times when you thought you were finished grieving. Be patient with yourself. Their intensity and frequency should diminish with time.
- Allow yourself time to grieve as well as giving yourself breaks from the grieving process.
- If you follow a religious faith, this can be a time for prayer and quiet meditation. Seek out your faith mentors.
- Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
- Learn to be sensitive and flexible with your new needs and lifestyle.
- Seek professional help if necessary.

## Stages of the Grieving Process

### Denial

- Disbelief
- Numbness
- Shock

### Anger and Guilt

- Anger, sometimes misdirected
- Guilt, sometimes misdirected

### Sadness and Despair

- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Tearfulness
- Depression
- Reminders that bring new waves of grief

### Acceptance and Hope

- Acceptance of your loss
- Adjustment to changes

### Aftermath

- Gradual lessening of feelings of grief

# COPING WITH TRAUMA

## Stress Management Tips

- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and resting when needed. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and nicotine and depressants such as alcohol.
- Seek out comfortable, familiar surroundings and avoid spending too much time alone.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful -- don't try to block recollections. It helps to talk about them. Feel free to set boundaries with people who have not been helpful in the past.
- Don't be anxious if reactions from past traumas re-emerge even though you may have felt those issues were resolved.
- Give yourself time to recover. Difficulties with concentration, memory or decision-making are common but short-term reactions. Seek help if reactions are interfering with job responsibilities. Focus on concrete, easily-achievable tasks.
- Remember that difficulty sleeping, nightmares, flashbacks, and feelings of being "hyper-alert" are common and will diminish in time.
- Avoid personalizing or taking responsibility for how others respond to the traumatic event. Do not compare or measure your reactions to those of other people -- each individual's experience is unique and personal.
- Communicate your feelings clearly. Others may not know how to respond to you appropriately. Let them know which responses are helpful and which are not.
- Know that anniversary dates or a specific holiday may trigger feelings related to the trauma. This is normal.
- Seek help from a professional counselor if symptoms persist.

### COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

#### Physical Responses

- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Muscle Tension
- Increased heart rate
- Stomach upset

#### Emotional Responses

- Shock or numbness
- Anger toward others involved
- Fear
- Depression
- Guilt/Frustration
- Sadness
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Loneliness

#### Mental Responses

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering details of event

#### Behavioral Responses

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry Outbursts
- Crying
- Irritability
- Decreased energy/ambition
- Marital/relationship conflict
- Increased use of alcohol or medications
- Fear of being alone