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**THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF
WHEN YOU ARE EXPERIENCING TRAUMATIC STRESS**
Some practical, common sense suggestions that work!

IT'S OKAY...

- Remember you are having normal human reactions, just like others under similar stress. You're not going "crazy" or having a nervous breakdown.
- Give yourself permission to feel bad. Like the flu, traumatic stress has to run its course.
- Unwanted thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal. Accept them as part of healing. They should decrease over time, and in most ways they are adaptive and healing.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH OTHERS

- Don't isolate yourself.
- Talk it out with people. Talk is a very healing medicine.
- Allow supportive people to assist you.
- Reach out to people who care: family, friends, clergy and counselors.
- Don't wait to ask for help if you want or need it.

STAY ACTIVE

- Maintain a normal, active and productive schedule; modify as necessary.
- Physical exercise (within your normal limits) is one of the best ways to reduce stress.
- Do things that you enjoy.

HELP OTHERS. IT WILL HELP YOU TOO!

- Realize that those around you may also be under stress.
- Help your co-workers. How are they doing?
- Assist family members who may also be experiencing stress.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Avoid stressful situations for a while.
- Have some relaxing times.
- Don't abuse drugs or alcohol. This can hinder and delay recovery.
- Eat well-balanced, regular meals, even if you don't feel like it.
- Get plenty of rest; remembering that sleep disturbance is common.
- Avoid hazardous activities. There is an increased likelihood of accidents.
- Delay making major life decisions until your stress level lowers and symptoms decrease significantly.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE EXPLOSION

There are several predictable phases that persons who suffer a trauma tend to go through. The phases usually occur in the following order, but may appear in any sequence.

SHOCK

Shock can last from a few hours to a week. This includes a feeling of immobilization, where you can't remember simple things like your own telephone number, where your keys are kept, what time it is, etc. This is followed by denial where you don't really believe what is happening or has happened. Often times you deny the fact that you were frightened and/or anxious.

IMPACT

Impact starts sometime after the explosion and can last for up to two weeks. This is characterized by anger, sometimes directed toward your employer, fellow employees, police, or just society in general. In this phase you question yourself on how well you handled the situation with self-questions such as, "Did I do the right thing?" This is the "what if" time when you think about what could have happened, or how you might have reacted differently. These self-doubts are common and expected. Another frequent occurrence in this impact phase is the onset of depression. You can give in to the feelings of hopelessness and impotence, unable to think of positive outcomes, see yourself as a helpless victim, and blame yourself for poor judgment and bad decisions.

RESOLUTION

Resolution may go on for up to two months. The first step is realizing that you probably did a good job with the explosion. The last step is one of acceptance, where you really understand what has happened, that fear is human, and stop second-guessing yourself or blaming yourself or others. Your "normal" is now a "different" normal.

If you have had a medical problem such as gastrointestinal disorder, hypertension, diabetes, seizure disorders, etc., be particularly aware of any changes in these medical conditions and seek medical evaluation immediately. A certain amount of emotional distress is common after trauma. If the anxiety, fear at work, depression or sleep disorders continue for more than a few days, you should seek professional assistance to help you with these difficulties. Do not be alone immediately following the explosion. Avoid alcohol or other drugs that are not prescribed.

Dreaming about the explosion is common, but should go away in a couple of weeks. There may be times where you think or feel that the explosion is reoccurring, something like a "mini-flashback."

You should talk about the explosion with family and friends, and with people who were there. The more you are able to talk about what happened with people who understand, the sooner the difficulties will pass and the associated problems will diminish.