

Critical Incident Stress Management

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) helps people process, cope and find closure with critical incidents by discussing their thoughts, feelings and reactions to traumatic events.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is any traumatic event that is outside the usual range of human experience. These events may cause traumatic stress reactions that can impair cognitive, emotional or behavioral function at the scene or later.

Examples of a critical incident:

- Child's death or trauma
- Community tragedy
- Mass-casualty disaster
- Multiple events occurring rapidly
- School crisis
- Suicide
- Trauma to someone you know
- Workplace trauma

What is a CISM debriefing and defusing?

A CISM debriefing:

- Is a group session led by a CISM team of trained peers and a mental health professional
- Is designed to help people understand behaviors, emotions and thoughts after a traumatic event
- Mitigates the impact of the situation and normalizes the event for people impacted
- Accelerates the healing process in normal people having normal reactions to abnormal events
- Is strictly confidential
- Is not a critique of actions or events
- Is limited to those who were directly affected by the incident
- Is usually done 72 to 84 hours after the event
- Is repeated at critical anniversaries and important dates
- Is one- to three-hours long
- Is peer driven and supported

A CISM defusing:

- Is a session led by CISM staff
- Is done within hours of the incident
- Is not as formal as a debriefing

Defusings can be done during or immediately after the shift the event occurred or held 24 to 48 hours following the event. Defusings can be repeated as needed.

What are stress reactions?

People involved in a traumatic event, including emergency personnel, may show symptoms of stress reactions including:

- Anger
- Anxiety, fear, guilt or depression
- Change of appetite
- Change in activity
- Depression
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Flashbacks
- Headaches
- Increased alcohol intake
- Irritability or emotional numbing
- Insomnia
- Memory and concentration problems
- Nausea
- Nightmares

How does a debriefing help?

- It provides a supportive and caring atmosphere
- It helps participants identify the signs and symptoms of normal reactions
- It reduces the feeling of isolation and inadequacy
- It helps people more quickly get back to eating, sleeping and functioning better
- It provides reassurance and support to others
- It provides better coping skills for future incidents

Request a debriefing or defusing

To request a debriefing or defusing, or for more information, call 507-327-3379.

The CISM team will:

- Ask for a brief description of incident
- Ask for agencies involved
- Ask for times that work for a debriefing
- Secure a room and provide refreshments
- Determine the number that will attend

You are responsible to contact those to be included on debriefing sessions. Remember to include only the people involved in the incident:

- Staff/co-workers
- Clergy

Separate sessions may be needed to accommodate diverse groups. Group size is limited to 25 people, but we can do multiple debriefings on different days.

Contact the CISM team

507-327-3379