

Cumann Lúthcleas Gael and the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) are committed to the welfare of its players, clubs, individuals, families and communities. No document can account for all critical incidents or for the reaction of individuals which will be different depending on if they are adult(s) or children, whether they witnessed the event(s) or, have close or distance relationships with those involved, etc. Nevertheless we have tried to capture the normal responses that many people experience following exceptional circumstances.

A critical incident is an emotional shock (GAA/GPA Guidelines, 2014). It's not easy to take in what has happened and to come to terms with it. It's normal to experience all kinds of unpleasant feelings, emotions and body sensations. During this time, memories, images and thoughts come into your mind even if you try to shut them out. These experiences may be confusing and even frightening. You may wonder if you will ever get over the critical incident, if you are losing control of yourself, or even if you are going mad. These worries are entirely understandable.

You will see from this advice leaflet that the thoughts, feelings and sensations you are experiencing are a normal reaction to stress and your body and mind are working to come to terms with the critical incident. Each person reacts in their own unique way and there are common reactions that many people share. This advice leaflet describes some of these common reactions.

REMEMBER if you are feeling unwell you should always go to your local G.P.



NORMAL FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE:

FEAR

- Of damage to oneself and those we love.
- Of being left alone, of having to leave loved ones.
- Of "breaking down" or "losing control".
- Of a similar event happening again - helplessness.
- Crises show up human weakness, as well as strength.

SADNESS

- For deaths, injuries and losses of every kind.
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair.

LONGING

- For all that has gone.

GUILT

- For being better off than others, i.e for surviving, for not being injured, for still having material things.
- Regrets for things not done.

MEMORIES

- Of feelings of loss or of love for other people in your life who have been injured or died at other times.

DISAPPOINTMENT

- For all the plans that can now never be fulfilled.

SHAME

- For having been exposed as helpless, emotional and needing others.
- For not having reacted as one would have wished - anger.
- At what happened, at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen.
- At the injustice and senselessness of it all.
- At the shame and indignities.
- At the lack of proper understanding by others and their inefficiencies.
- Why us, why our community.

HOPE

- For the future and better times.

Everyone may have these feelings. Experience has shown that they may vary in intensity according to circumstance. Nature heals through allowing these feelings to come out. This will not lead to loss of control, but stopping these feelings may lead to other and possibly more complicated problems.

DO REMEMBER, CRYING CAN GIVE RELIEF

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SENSATIONS

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, fuzziness of the mind including loss of memory and concentration, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty in breathing, nausea, diarrhoea, muscular tension which may lead to pain, e.g. headaches, neck and backaches, abdominal pain etc.

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NUMBNESS

Your mind may allow the event to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly, either as 'being strong' or 'uncaring'.

ACTIVITY

Helping others may give you some relief but remember looking after yourself is a priority.

REALITY

Facing the reality, by attending funerals, inspecting losses, returning to the scene, will help you to come to terms with the event.

SUPPORT

It can be a relief to receive other people's physical and emotional support. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can help.

PRIVACY

In order to deal with feelings, you may find it necessary at times to be alone, or just with family and a close friend.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

New friendships and relationships may develop. On the other hand, strains in existing relationships may appear. The good feelings in giving and receiving may be replaced by conflict. You may feel that too much of the wrong things are offered, or that you cannot give as much as expected. Accidents are more frequent after severe stress. Alcohol and drug intake may increase due to the extra tension.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

DON'T

- don't** bottle up feelings.
- don't** avoid talking about what happened.
- don't** expect the memories to go away – the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.
- don't** forget that children experience similar feelings.

DO

- do** express your emotions and let children share in the grief.
- do** take every opportunity to review the experience.
- do** allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care.
- do** take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with those important to you.
- do** express your needs clearly and honestly.
- do** try to keep your life as normal as possible after the acute grief.
- do** send your children back to school, GAA club and let them keep up with their activities.
- do** take care while driving.

REMEMBER: accidents are more common after severe stress

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

If you feel you need further help as a consequence of being involved in a critical incident, you are advised to contact your G.P.



Samaritans - 24hr support line for anyone who needs to talk to someone about anything. Official mental health partner and support service for the GAA. Helpline **116 123**. Go to www.samaritans.org to access your local support branch.

FOR REPUBLIC OF IRELAND CONTACT:

Visit www.yourmentalhealth.ie for a 'one stop' list of contacts and resources for both national and local support groups.

Aware Ireland – Is a non-directive listening service for people affected by depression, either personally or as family and friends. The Helpline **1890 303 302** is open seven days a week from 10am-10pm. www.aware.ie

Pieta House – provides free counselling, therapy and support to individuals, couples, families and children who have been bereaved by suicide. You can contact them any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on their freecall suicide helpline **1800 247 247**. www.pieta.ie

Reach Out – An Online service to help young people aged 16-25 ie.reachout.com. <https://ie.reachout.com>

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND CONTACT:

Visit www.mindingyourhead.info for a 'one stop' list of contacts and resources for both national and local support groups.

LIFELINE - crisis response helpline service operating 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing distress or despair. Lifeline is here to help. Tel: 0808 808 8000. www.lifelinehelpline.info

CONCLUSION

In this advice leaflet you have read about common reactions to critical incidents and you will have had an opportunity to identify those which particularly fit to how you have been feeling.

The main message is this: the feelings, thoughts and body sensations you have been experiencing are entirely normal. They are a natural, human reaction to extreme stress associated with critical incidents.



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NORMAL RESPONSES TO ABNORMAL INCIDENCES

