



# The Safety Zone

The Newsletter of the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust

## Coping with Critical Incident Stress

*Learn to recognize signs & work through issues*

Sometimes things go wrong in the workplace, and when a critical incident does occur, you may experience "critical incident stress." Signs and symptoms of critical incident stress will vary, depending on the individual and how the critical incident affected him or her.

They may be:

- **Physical.** Trauma can affect you physically, causing unusual fatigue, chills, thirst, chest pain, headaches and dizziness.
- **Emotional.** You may feel grief, fear, guilt, intense anger, apprehension, depression, irritability and chronic anxiety.
- **Cognitive.** You may find it difficult to pay attention, concentrate, make decisions, solve problems or remember things. You may feel uncertain or confused, or you may have nightmares.
- **Behavioral.** You may act differently as a result of critical incident stress, finding it difficult to rest, withdrawing from contact with others, becoming irritable and antisocial, drinking more alcohol, and eating significantly more or less than before.

Watch for these symptoms in yourself and others affected by the critical incident. It's important to understand that things are not expected to go

back to normal right away. It takes time to process and work through trauma.

To deal with critical incident stress, many organizations offer a debriefing led by an experienced facilitator, who walks affected employees through a stress management protocol and/or connects them to appropriate counseling services.



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### news & notes

#### USE THESE STRESS BUSTERS TO MANAGE STRESS:

- Have a good attitude and sense of humor toward yourself and your job.
- Accept compliments.
- Don't try to control others' behavior.
- Laugh as often as possible.
- Find exercise you enjoy (e.g., walking, softball, tennis, bowling).
- Get outside; exposure to sunlight may make you feel better.
- Get up from your desk; take a walk; get a drink of water, etc.
- Practice for presentations or performance reviews to feel more control.
- Leave for work earlier.
- Decide if all tasks must be done—or be done by you.
- Let off steam with a trusted person, then put issues behind you.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as stretching or deep breathing.
- Leave yourself unscheduled time each day.
- Volunteer, and think less about yourself and more about others



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## Stress Strategies

### Learn these year-round management techniques

According to ComPsych Corporation ([www.compsych.com](http://www.compsych.com)), more than half of employees are reporting high levels of stress. Are your stress levels high?

Follow these stress management tips:

- **Control what you can, accept what you can't.** "If you learn to accept the things that are beyond your control and focus on the things that you can control instead, you'll spend less time stressing over outside factors and more time getting things done," says Benoy Tamang, CEO of eFile Cabinet.
- **Remember to breathe.** "Inhale deeply to the count of five, then exhale normally through your nose for the same count. Do this for several minutes or until you feel calm," Tamang suggests.
- **Schedule some breaks.** This gives you "time to clear your mind, catch your breath, and refocus before diving back in."
- **Focus on priorities.** "Identify your priorities and focus your efforts on the projects that will make the biggest impact," Tamang advises.
- **Work smarter, not harder.** "Employ the proper tools and resources to help you get more done without having to push yourself beyond your limits."

Tamang's other stress-reduction tips include: Eat well, exercise daily and get your sleep; minimize interruptions, and think positive thoughts.

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### Got News?

Do you have news that needs to be circulated or have a subject you would like for us to address? Let us know by emailing the newsletter editor at [tcreel@arkhospitals.org](mailto:tcreel@arkhospitals.org).

AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust Program is administered by Risk Management Resources (RMR), a division of BancorpSouth Insurance Services, Inc. [www.bxsi.com](http://www.bxsi.com). In March 2003 the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust was established. The program provides workers' compensation coverage to AHA members.

Risk Management Resources, the administrator for the program, assists members in the areas of claims management, safety and loss control. Tina Creel, Vice President of AHA Services, Inc., is the Group Manager of the Trust and provides oversight of the day-to-day operation of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight of the overall operation of the Group Trust.