

***A Critical Incident is any event with sufficient impact to produce significant emotional reactions now or later.***

Critical incidents are generally considered extremely unusual in the range of ordinary human experiences. Examples of critical incidents may include:

- ◆ Crewmember death in the line of duty
- ◆ Child's death or serious injury
- ◆ Body recovery or other stressful search and rescue operation
- ◆ A suicide
- ◆ Natural disasters or pandemics
- ◆ Use of deadly force
- ◆ Grotesque injuries
- ◆ Acts of terrorism or other disasters

***Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a system of interventions designed to mitigate the adverse psychological reactions that may accompany critical incidents.***

The CISM process is not therapy; its focus is to minimize the harmful effects through psychological first aid, education and follow-up. CISM program services include: pre-incident training for units, command consultation, individual and group interventions and support following an incident, and referrals to additional services and/or resources as necessary.

***A professional and caring team!***

The Critical Incident Stress Management team uses International Critical Incident Stress Foundation trained peers, Chaplains, and mental health professionals, and is managed by CISM Team Coordinators who are usually the Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC).

***How can you prepare for an unexpected incident?***

Resilience and pre-incident CISM training and education is available to individuals or units. To request this training, contact your USCG Work-Life Employee Assistance Program Coordinator at 1-202-475-5100.

***What is Resilience?***

Resilience is your ability to cope effectively and bounce back from stress and adversity, and hopefully even grow through the experience.

Resilience is not a fixed state. You may be more resilient at different times in your life than others. Most importantly, resilience can be learned, practiced, developed, and strengthened.

***Resilient People Are More Likely To...***

- ◆ Meet the demands of their work and personal lives successfully
- ◆ Take action to deal with challenges, problems, and setbacks
- ◆ Seek support and assistance when they need it
- ◆ Know when to stop, rest, and replenish inner resources
- ◆ Have a sense of independence, self-efficacy, and self-worth

***What assistance and resources are available when an incident occurs?***

- ◆ Command consultations to discuss the appropriate level of response for an incident
- ◆ Peer lead discussions for groups and individuals
- ◆ Coping skills and strategies
- ◆ Spiritual and psychological resources and support
- ◆ Referrals to additional resources such as support groups

***Stress Relievers***



***What Do I Do After an Incident?***

- ◆ Within 24-48 hours, alternate periods of appropriate physical exercise with relaxation. This will alleviate some of the physical reactions
- ◆ Structure your time—keep busy
- ◆ You're normal and having normal reactions—don't label yourself crazy
- ◆ Talk to people
- ◆ Be aware of numbing the pain
- ◆ Reach out—people do care
- ◆ Maintain a normal schedule if possible
- ◆ Spend time with others. Talk about what happened
- ◆ Help others involved or affected
- ◆ Give yourself permission to feel rotten
- ◆ Keep a journal
- ◆ Do things that feel good to you
- ◆ Realize others are stressed also
- ◆ Don't make any big life changes
- ◆ Make daily decisions to maintain a feeling of control
- ◆ Get plenty of rest
- ◆ Re-occurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal—don't try to fight them—they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- ◆ Eat well and regular meals

## How Stress Effects the Body

### The Good Stress

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive (“eustress”) - such as getting a job or promotion or being given greater responsibilities—keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger.



### The Bad Stress

Stress becomes negative (“Distress”) when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between challenges. Distress can result in a stress reaction. You may experience a cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or physical stress reaction. Physical stress reactions may indicate the need for medical evaluation. Research suggests that stress can also bring on or worsen certain symptoms or other medical conditions.



## Resources



1-855-247-8778 / 855-CG SUPRT

[www.cgsuprt.com](http://www.cgsuprt.com)

### Chaplains

<http://www.uscg.mil/chaplain/locations/>

LT Patrick Flynn (o): 410-636-7715  
(c): 443-433-8253

### Medical

Emergency: 911  
TRACEN Cape May 609-898-6610

### Work-Life Office

To contact the USCG Work-Life staff nearest you,  
call 1-202-475-5100.

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

### Veterans Crisis Line

Call 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1) or Text 838255

Chat: [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

### HSWL Regional Practice Cape May

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Cape May, NJ 08204  
Phone: (609) 898-6731 (w) (609) 819-5493 (c)  
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## UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

### Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program

