

WHAT TO DO:

- Alternate periods of exercise with relaxation during the first 24 – 28 hrs.
- Talk about what is happening for you with a trusted friend
- Beware of numbing the pain. Do not increase your intake of alcohol, caffeine or other stimulants. Try to cut down for a few days.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible and keep busy.
- Talk to other lifesavers and check out how they are doing but don't compare yourself to them. Everyone reacts differently to all situations.
- If you are having difficulty sleeping – get out of bed, make a hot drink, do some writing, watch TV. Don't just toss and turn for hours.
- Eat well-balanced meals even if you don't feel like it.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible, which will give you a feeling of control over your life.
- Don't make any big life changes.

It is important to seek further assistance from your General Practitioner and possibly a Psychologist if you have ongoing concerns that are impacting on your life.

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS:

- Be available to listen if the person wants to talk – encourage but don't pressure them.
- Reassure them that their reactions will subside over time.
- Try not to take emotional outbursts personally.
- Ask if they need any assistance with everyday tasks
- Give them private time.
- Don't be afraid to ask what you can do that would be helpful.

The following referral agencies may be helpful for 24-hour emergency support:

☎ Lifeline: 131 114

☎ Salvation Army: 9331 6000



Surf Life Saving Australia

Locked Bag 2
DONDI NSW 2026
Phone (02) 9130 8243
Fax (02) 9130 8312

Email: experts@surflifesaving.com.au

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The life of the beach.

Critical Incident Information

SLSA acknowledges the work of Ms Patricia Newton, TIPS Founder, Sydney Northern Beaches Branch, NSW, in the content of this brochure.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

As a member of surf lifesaving you may at some stage be involved in what's called a **Critical Incident**.

As part of our Duty of Care, Surf Life Saving has produced this pamphlet to assist members who are exposed to critical events.

In surf lifesaving critical incident may take the form of:

- Search and rescues
- Unsuccessful search and rescues
- Drowning
- Abuse
- Aggressive behaviour
- Violation of safety rules
- Needle stick injuries
- Stings
- Heart attacks
- Fin chops or
- Asthma attacks

Not all people will experience a stress reaction to a Critical Incident. Keeping in mind the uniqueness of each individual there are some common reactions to trauma.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Some of the symptoms that can be experienced may include:

PHYSICAL

- Headaches, tiredness
- Vomiting, shakiness
- Increase heart rate
- Shock symptoms
- Difficulty breathing
- Appetite changes
- Chest pains

THOUGHTS

- Concentration difficulties,
- Confusion
- Nightmares, hyper vigilance
- Intrusive images and/or thoughts of the incident
- Difficulties making decisions
- Poor problem solving
- Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
- Memories of previous events
- Self Blame

EMOTIONS

- Fear, guilt
- Grief, Denial
- Anxiety, depression, sadness
- Numbness
- Anger, agitation
- Feeling lost Feeling abandoned
- Frequent mood swings

BEHAVIOUR

- Withdrawal from others
- Avoidance and fear of the situation or reminder of the incident
- Increased alcohol/drug consumption
- Emotional outbursts
- Decline in performance
- Inability to rest
- Sleep disturbance
- Change in social activity
- Changes in usual communication style

Sometimes the stress reactions may be experienced immediately after the event, or sometimes it may take weeks before any reaction appears.

Reactions are uncomfortable but are an important part of recovering and getting on with life, symptoms will usually reduce over 4-6 week period.