“What Is A Critical Incident?”

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"Your profession is not what brings home your paycheck. Your profession is what you were put on earth to do. With such passion and such intensity that it becomes spiritual in calling."

~ Vincent Van Gogh

REMS CISM TEAM
When was the last time someone called 9-1-1 to invite you to a BBQ?
A Critical Incident is any event that generates such intense emotional energy that it overwhelms an individual’s or a group’s ability to cope and causes impairment in work or personal activities.
In Simple Terms . . .

There must be a traumatic event which is beyond the usual experience of everyday life, and there must be a reaction to that traumatic event!
Critical incidents are determined by how they undermine a person's sense of safety, security and competency in the world. This results in a form of psychiatric injury, also called traumatic impact or traumatic stress.
Public safety personnel don’t recognize how what we see, hear, smell, taste and feel affects us on a daily basis! Our response to violence are so subtle and long-term that we do not realize what is happening to us until we begin to lose what is most important in our lives. . .
• Our Families
• Friends
• Health
• Spirituality
• Honor
• Commitment
• And Sense of Self Worth
Let’s look at the stressors **besides** the emergency calls that may cause us stress

- Changing schedules (shift work and overtime)
- Changing co-workers
- Environment (cold, heat, noise)
- Situational dangers (physical injury, communicable diseases)
- Emotional demands
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Nuisance calls
- Need for quick decision making
- Boredom
- Fatigue
- Uncertainty
**REMEMBER . . .**

**Critical incidents** do not affect everyone the same way. An observed suicide may be a critical incident to a rookie but may minimally affect a veteran.
At other times, small factors that influence an event may change a routine situation into a critical incident. We all know, however, that situations are not just categorized in our minds as either routine or critical.
What else is happening in your life?

Sources of Stress

Cataclysmic events
- I have to be perfect
- I'm not good enough
- Being a Carer
- Moving house
- Divorce
- Life change

Chronic stressors
- Abuse
- Conflict
- Fear of failure
- Limiting Beliefs
- Frustration
- Pleasing everybody
- Comparing to others
- Financial problems
- Unhappiness with Job
- Occupation
- Burnout
- Death of a loved one
- Relationship problems
- Hassles
- Illness
- Past traumas & drama
We react with a range of thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions, depending upon our interpretations of situations.
What is important is that there is no good or bad, right or wrong, strong or weak reaction to an incident. There is only how each individual feels during and after the situation.
You Know You are in Trouble When . . .

- Confusion (“dumbing down”)
- Inability to concentrate
- Difficulty in decision making
- Guilt
- Preoccupation (obsessions) with event
- Inability to understand consequences of behavior
- Suicidal / homicidal ideation
- Anger
The best kind of friend is the kind you can sit on a porch swing with, never say a word, and walk away feeling like it was the best conversation you've ever had.

Quotes & Thoughts
Examples of Critical Incidents

• Suicide of a colleague
• Line of duty death
• Serious on – the - job injury
• Disaster or a multi - casualty incident
• Police shooting, or killing or wounding of any person in a routine operation, or any event with significant threat to those involved
Examples of Critical Incidents

• Significant events involving children
• Relatives or a known victim
• Prolonged incidents especially with a loss
• Events with excessive media interest
• Watching someone else die, experience extreme pain or physical injury
• A belief of failed responsibility that results in harm to others
• The belief of unjustified survival or escape/avoidance from harm
A response to a stimulus characterized by increased physical and psychological AROUSAL

(Everly, 1999)
Critical Incidents
Do not have to be large incidents
Grace McDonnell posing for a portrait in this family photo taken Aug. 18, 2012. Grace McDonnell was killed Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, when a gunman opened fire at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Conn., killing 26 children and adults at the school.
GOD BLESS the INNOCENT VICTIMS
THANK YOU FIRST RESPONDERS
FOR THE FALLEN

PREScott, AZ

LAsT aLARM 6/30/2013

FIRE & RESCUE

HEROES REMEMBERED
Some of our Critical Incidents

Rappahannock EMS Council
Critical Incident Stress Team
3 YEAR OLD DROWNS
(Colonial Beach, VA 8/9/13)
12 YEAR OLD ACCIDENTALLY RAN OVER BY MOTHER (STAFFORD, VA) (2013)
TEEN WITH KNIFE KILLED BY DEPUTY (FAUQUIER, VA) 2013
SHERIFF'S DEPUTY JASON EDWARD MOONEY, 24, OF STAFFORD COUNTY DIED FRIDAY, OCT. 19, 2007, AS A RESULT OF AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT
VIRGINIA STATE TROOPER ADAM BOWEN
(King George County) (06/24/2011)
MVA
FATHER AND SON KILLED IN SMALL PLANE ACCIDENT (SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY) (2012)
3 MONTH OLD PEDIATRIC DEATH
(Spotsylvania County)
(07/2013)
12 MONTH OLD SHAKEN BABY
(QUANTICO, VA)
(2011)
4 YEAR OLD KILLED BY FAMILY DOG

(ORANGE COUNTY, VA) (2005)
4 YEAR OLD FALLS FROM WINDOW
(FREDERICKSBURG, VA) (2005)
A Few Principles Of Life

People are tough

Friends and family are important

Conversation helps

AND

Time heals all wounds
SO FINALLY . . .

Whenever we forget, Life has a habit of reminding us of the important things!

Simple TRUTH: You never, ever know what is around the corner, So don’t sweat the small stuff . . .

“You’ve gotta dance like there’s nobody watching, love like you’ll never be hurt, sing like there’s nobody listening, and live like it’s heaven on earth.”
Dance Like There's Nobody Watching . . .
Teamwork is the ability to work as a group toward a common vision, even if that vision becomes extremely blurry

\ldots WE ARE ALL ONE TEAM
Look for something **POSITIVE** in each day, even if some days you have to look a little harder.
We can help you!

Call your Regional Critical Incident Stress Management Team
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMS COUNCIL CONTACTS</th>
<th>EMS COUNCIL WEBSITES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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*Virginia’s EMS Regions*