

GRANT WOOD AEA  
**CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

## WAYS ADULTS CAN MANAGE STRESS AND GRIEF REACTIONS

- Let others help you. Talk about your thoughts and feelings as often as you feel the need. Identify friends, family, coworkers, counselors/therapists or spiritual directors who are helpful listeners. Repeatedly talking about the event and your reactions is part of the healing process.
- Recognize that your feelings (sadness, sorrow, confusion, anger, etc.) are all normal reactions to the traumatic event. You may find yourself even becoming more irritable at times.
- Understand that current losses or traumatic events often resurrect prior losses, and that multiple losses can erode past coping strategies that seemed to work well for you.
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself:
  - Make sure to get enough sleep. An increase in fatigue is common at these times.
  - Eat a balanced diet. You might even consider reducing caffeinated beverages.
  - Consider meditation, relaxation tapes, or listening to your favorite music.
  - Get physical exercise -- e.g., take a walk, walk the dog, garden, "work out", etc.
- There is a temptation when the stress level is high to try to numb the feelings with alcohol and drugs. Substance abuse complicates the problems, rather than relieving them.
- Avoid making major life decisions regarding your job, buying a house or car, moving, etc., during this emotionally unsettling time.
- Connect with your friends and family in an enjoyable activity --going to a park, bowling, attending a concert, playing monopoly, renting a silly movie, etc.
- Try to maintain a steady level of productive activity at work and play, but pace yourself.
- Try to finish one activity or project before beginning another.
- You may discover that you have to write things down or remind yourself more often.
- Know and respect your personal limitations. Don't make unreasonable demands on yourself. Allow yourself to say "No" without feeling guilty.
- Try to avoid feeling that you have to "get through this quickly" and "get back to your normal routine". Give yourself permission to slow down.
- However, don't be surprised if you do get back into a normal work and family routine fairly quickly. This can be reassuring and comforting to many.
- Above all, be understanding of yourself and others.
- What you are experiencing is normal for a traumatic situation.

