

## Part 1 – SECTION 13 THE AFTERMATH

**During and after a crisis, school leaders and teachers are at risk of succumbing to mental and emotional stress or injury. In schools, we rush to bring in psychologists and social workers to counsel children. We are sometimes too quick to dismiss the idea that we adults may need help too--and that's where we make a mistake.**

In crisis, human beings often experience one or more physical responses, including shock or numbness, an adrenaline rush, a raised heartbeat, sweating, and hyperventilation. These are normal responses, part of our fight-or-flight syndrome. We also experience emotional reactions like shock, disbelief, denial, anger or rage, sorrow, confusion, frustration, self-blame, and guilt.



Although we may feel some of these emotions immediately, we may not experience some emotions for days or weeks. These too are normal responses, but sometimes they take us by surprise. If we do not acknowledge their power, they can cause us damage.

According to the research, some traumatic events are more apt to cause serious reactions than others are. High on the stress list are:

- Human-caused events.
- Events that may be life-threatening.
- Events that violate our sense of how the world is or should be.
- Events that attract high media coverage.
- Events that we can identify with.

[*"Impact on Law Enforcement and EMS Personnel," Lois Chapman Dick, MSW, from Grief After Sudden Loss, ed., Kenneth J. Doka, Ph.D.*]

Crises that involve children in schools often fit all these categories, and adults who must support students and their families through a crisis are vulnerable to stress (critical incidence stress) responses. Many of these responses will emerge within the first 24 hours. Some, unheeded, might not show up for a year or more.

The symptoms vary and are sometimes deceptive. A formerly secure, functional adult may suddenly be unable to concentrate, may get angry or feel violent at the smallest provocation, may feel constantly tired or bored, may be obsessed with guilt, may no longer feel pleasure, or may experience feelings of paranoia or vulnerability.

The good news is that there are simple intervention techniques that--especially if they are used soon after the event--can help the caretaker adults understand their reactions and begin to heal. Center Unified School Student Services Teams--made up of psychologists, social workers, and counselors--are the best place to look for immediate help. Every school crisis plan should include planning for the aftermath.

AVCS will survey staff in the aftermath of a crisis for signs of distress.

Individuals who need assistance will be provided primary intervention by the school counselor and will be then referred for EAP counseling through the health benefits plan.