

# Supporting Staff After A Critical Incident

A Thrive Worldwide Resource

**Post-crisis response is about providing the right kind of support at the right time. This information sheet provides tips on relevant support mechanisms that your organisation can apply when a staff member, or team, has faced a crisis or critical incident.**

It may seem obvious, but the flow of support moves from basic needs through to psycho-social needs. We cannot provide for psychosocial needs while basic physical needs are unmet.

As people navigate crisis in different ways, your responses will need to be adapted. These timeframes are general guidelines. Use this resource alongside the Trauma Information Sheet in understanding common reactions to traumatic experiences. We recommend managers attend a Psychological First Aid training to become more comfortable with these tips.

## IN THE HOURS AFTER AN EVENT

- Ensure physical safety and other basic needs of the staff person.

- Provide the staff person with timely, accurate information and regularly communicate with them. Information is safety.
- Provide logistical support as required: family tracing, housing, transportation / financial needs, arrangements for the death of friend or family member, and other practical assistance. Stabilise and orient those who are emotionally overwhelmed: grounding and breathing exercises.
- Identify and enlist the support of a PFA provider.
- Seek immediate medical or psychological support if there is a risk of harm to self or others.
- without judgment.
- Provide information on common reactions and strategies for coping in the aftermath of a crisis.
- Help staff establish a new routine. This may include creating a flexible working schedule. Don't assume that they would like an extended leave or to be relocated.
- Empower staff to make their own decisions. Don't have an agenda for what is best for them. Regaining a sense of control and autonomy is an important part of recovery. Recognise and respect that different spiritual and cultural values are in play.
- Encourage positive coping and help-seeking. Model a good work-life balance and share openly about the benefits of getting support when needed.

## IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING

- Provide Psychological First Aid to individuals and/or groups: A time and space for staff to talk if they want to.
- Listen with empathy and validate their experience.
- Respect different perspectives and allow concerns, fears, and anxieties to be voiced
- Encourage socialisation with friends, family and colleagues.
- Don't forget to look after yourself.

## 2-4 WEEKS

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- Continue with the above if needed.
- Depending on the severity of the event, an organisation should consider making a psychological debrief mandatory. This may mitigate delay-onset.
- Watchful waiting. Managers, peer supporters, and those trained in PFA should be attentive to emotional or behavioural changes in their colleagues who have been through a traumatic event.
- Make sure to support the peer supporters, or those who witnessed or heard about the event.

## AFTER 4 WEEKS

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- Provide a PFA check-in one month after the event.
- If problematic emotions and behaviours persist after 4 weeks it is advisable to refer the staff person to professional support. Contact Thrive Worldwide and / or have a preselected service provider list for your

location.

- Follow up with staff who left the field or the organisation.
- Understand that some people may have a delayed reaction to the event, months or years later.

And if you are unsure about what to say or do with a colleague you suspect to be in trouble, reach out and get some advice from a professional.

Thrive Worldwide is available to provide the following support:

- Trauma specific psychological interventions
- Psychological First Aid Training
- Family Liaison Training
- Management of Sexual Violence Training
- Sexual Violence Consultancy (Including policy review)

Thank you for accessing this resource.  
For more resources and dedicated support:  
**visit [www.thrive-worldwide.org](http://www.thrive-worldwide.org)**  
**email [info@thrive-worldwide.org](mailto:info@thrive-worldwide.org)**

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