

coping strategies

How can you help your family members?

Your loved one has been involved in a highly challenging event, sometimes known as a **“critical incident”**. He/she may be in the process of adjusting to this event. Exposure to a critical incident may produce changes in your loved one’s behavior and their physical, cognitive, and emotional functioning. These changes are common and signal that they are beginning the process of adjusting to an event that may have been temporarily overwhelming.

All the parts of our lives overlap and influence each other: personal, professional, past, present, etc. The impact of a critical incident may be relieved by those who love us the most. So, don’t underestimate your importance in your loved one’s recovery. Listed below are some hints, which may prove helpful over the next few days or weeks.

- Be ready to listen and reassure when your loved one is ready to talk. Talking is the best medicine. But don’t pressure your loved one to talk. Let them know you are there when they are ready.
- Don’t avoid the subject. When your loved one is ready to talk, don’t avoid the situation.
- You may not understand what your loved one is going through, but offer your love and support. Ask what you can do to help.
- Be patient. Your loved one may go through many mood changes, understand that this is part of the healing process for them.
- To be an effective source of support, you must receive support as well. Alert your friends that you may need some extra TLC in the coming days.
- Be supportive and non-judgmental. We truly don’t know what the other person feels or understand why they react the way they do.
- Laugh. Use humor to lighten things up when possible.
- Validate the person. Give them hugs, offer praise, remind them how much they are appreciated, how important they are.
- Keep routines going. Try to continue your normal home life as much as possible. Encourage your loved one to participate in routine things.
- Give your loved one time. Each one of us heals differently, handles stress differently. Allow your loved one all the time necessary to heal from this event.
- Keep an eye on them. Be aware of how your loved one is coping with this critical incident. Don’t be afraid to seek professional help if you are concerned about how your loved one is doing.