

Spouses' Tips:

Dealing with your First Responder's Bad Day



WHAT SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR?

CHANGES in your first responder:

This can include changes in appetite, sex drive, sleep habits, patience levels, socialization with you and/or friends and loved ones, personal grooming, exercise, sarcasm, cynicism, or personality in general.

SIGNS OF POST-EVENT CRITICAL STRESS

- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Isolating from others
- Irritability
- Having low or no energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Thoughts or memories he can't get out of his head
- More confused or forgetful than normal
- Experiencing a change in sex drive
- Unexplained aches or pains
- Having nightmares
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Drinking more than he should
- Engaging in reckless behaviors
- Using drugs
- Having anxiety or panic attacks
- When the limbic brain is "injured," it takes a defensive posture even in the absence of viable threat or danger
- Worst case scenario syndrome

If there has been a critical incident, it may take a few days for your first responder to get back to "normal". However, make a mental note if the symptoms are lasting over 7-10 days, and possibly check in with him/her. Pay attention to your inner voice. If the symptoms start impacting your first responder's health, last over 3 weeks, or there are warning signs of suicidal ideation, seek help.



Potential warning signs of suicidal ideation include:

WARNING

ACTIONS:

- Giving away possessions
- Withdrawal (family, friends, school, work)
- Loss of interest in sports and leisure
- Misuse of alcohol/drugs
- Impulsive/reckless behavior
- Self-mutilation
- Extreme behavior changes

PHYSICAL:

- Lack of interest in appearance
- Change/loss in sex interest
- Disturbed Sleep
- Change/loss of appetite/weight
- Physical health complaints

WORDS:

- "All of my problems will end soon."
- "No one can do anything to help me now."
- "Now I know what they were going through."
- "I just can't take it anymore."
- "I am a burden to everyone."
- "I can't do anything right."
- "I just can't think straight anymore."



FEELINGS:

- Angry
- Guilty
- Worthless
- Lonely
- Desperate
- Sad
- Hopeless
- Helpless