

Find a car

---

HOME
EDITORIAL
OPINION
UAE
BUSINESS
WORLD
SUBCONTINENT
MIDDLE EAST
APPOINTMENTS
USED CARS
CLASSIFIEDS
GOLD/FOREX

**WEEKEND**

**Jobs in UAE**

Search Now..

Khaleej Times Online >> WEEKEND

**After the Emergency!**

By Carole Spiers (Pressure Gauge)

22 June 2007

Print  E-mail 

THE RECENT DEATHS, devastation and disruption to Oman's oil and gas exports, resulting from cyclone Gonu, highlighted the ways in which Middle East businesses respond to traumatic incidents.

Whilst many organisations regularly review their continuity planning to ensure they have the data systems in place to protect their operations in the event of an emergency, relatively few have invested in the training required to ensure that the well-being of their staff is a high priority — both during and after such an incident.

Research shows that it is how an organisation treats its staff in the aftermath of a traumatic incident which can have a profound effect, not only on the recovery of the individuals directly involved, but also upon their colleagues and their families.

Individuals can be traumatised (i.e. severely affected), by a disaster, for some time afterwards and that during this period, their productivity and commitment to the organisation can be drastically reduced. In this context, managers can find themselves having to play a key role in managing a situation which may ultimately be far more damaging to the organisation than the initial event itself.

**The nature of trauma**

Anyone, who has been involved in a traumatic incident, is likely to have some form of reaction to it. These reactions may happen immediately, or may not occur for weeks, months or sometimes, years afterwards. People are more likely to be badly affected if:

There were many deaths or injuries during the incident, or that these were sudden or violent.

The individual experiences feelings of guilt that he or she could have done more to help the injured or to have prevented the accident

They lack support from family, friends or colleagues

The stress from the incident comes on top of existing problems in their lives

**Emotional Reactions**

An individual's emotions are likely to be in turmoil after the event, although certain others may feel nothing. Some of the more common reactions are:

Guilt, for not having done more, or for having survived when others did not

Anger at what has happened, or the injustice or senselessness of it

Fear of breaking down or losing control, or of a similar event happening again and being unable to cope

Shame - for not having reacted as they might have wanted to, or for feeling helpless

Sadness - about the deaths and injuries and feelings of depression.

**Psychological Reactions**

People are very likely to find that they are unable to stop thinking about the incident, dream about it, suffer loss of memory, concentration or motivation. They may experience flashbacks, hate to be reminded of what happened, or have feelings that they have always to be on their guard against a repetition of the event

**Physiological Reactions**

Individuals often experience tiredness, sleeplessness, nightmares, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty in breathing, tightness in the throat and chest, sickness, diarrhoea, menstrual problems, changes in sexual interest or eating habits, and many other symptoms - frequently without consciously making a connection with the incident.

**Resultant Behavioural Problems**

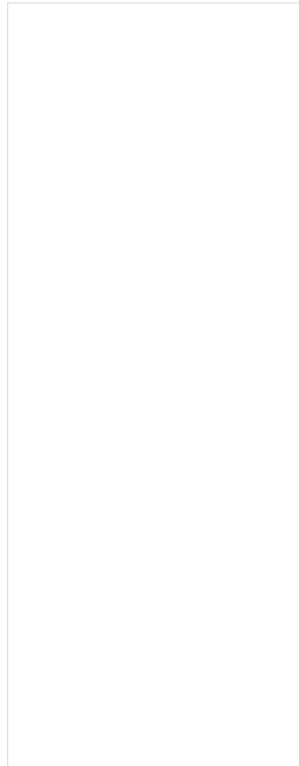
People may feel hurt and their relationships with others, particularly their partner, may feel under additional strain. They may find themselves taking their anger out on their family, or emotionally withdrawing from close relationships, just when they need them the most.

**What Can Be Done To Help**

Nature often heals by allowing feelings to emerge naturally and enabling people to want to talk about them. This is very helpful, and should be encouraged if the opportunity arises.

Talking to a trained counsellor is often of benefit and can reduce much of the tension and anxiety.

Trying to ignore personal feelings, or to avoid thinking or talking about the incident in the belief that they can cope, is



**Other Weekend Features**

- Cashing in on Clairvoyance
  - Bong sung blue
  - Diet with osteoporosis
  - Beauty hot list
  - Fun in the sun
  - Looking for a high-flying career
- [Click here More News](#)

usually harmful to such individuals in the long term.

Suppressing feelings can lead to storing up problems that will come out eventually or create even greater difficulties.

[Write to Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise](#)

Copyright © 2008 Khaleej Times

People who have experienced a traumatic incident should be encouraged to seek professional help if:

They feel chronic tension, empty, exhausted or depressed

They continue to have nightmares, are sleeping badly or have 'flashbacks'

They have no-one with whom to share their emotions

Their relationships seem to be suffering, or sexual problems develop

They start to be accident-prone or their work performance suffers

They smoke, drink or take drugs to excess

It is important to encourage individuals to remember that everyone is basically the same person as they were before the incident happened and that talking about their experience can help and that suppressing their feelings can lead to further problems

#### KEY LEARNING POINTS

HOW AN organisation treats its staff in the aftermath of a traumatic incident can have a profound effect on their future commitment to the business.

Anyone who has been involved in a traumatic incident is likely to have some form of reaction to it.

Some of the more common emotional reactions include guilt, anger, fear, shame, sadness and depression.

It is important to encourage each individual to remember that they are basically the same person they were before the incident happened.

Backing-up your staff is just as important as backing-up your data!

**Carole Spiers, the UK's leading Guru on corporate stress-management and organisational change, is also a regular BBC broadcaster and international author on these major business issues. She is also a regular Motivational Speaker at UAE conferences. Your questions and input on this article or any related topic, will be welcomed. Each Friday, we will discuss a selection of your letters or case-studies. Please write to Carole Spiers at: [ktwkd@emirates.net.ae](mailto:ktwkd@emirates.net.ae)**



Print



E-mail

