

## **A Special Report**

# **'Trauma Management'**

## **Handling Shock Victims and Training For Occupational Risks**

by

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# Trauma and Coping with the Aftermath of a Critical Incident

## Introduction

'To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom'. *Bertrand Russell*

Nothing can adequately prepare organisations or individuals for the experience of a traumatic incident, because by definition it is outside 'normal' experience. This was vividly illustrated by those affected at the collapse of the World Trade Centre, New York (2001) and the disasters of Canary Wharf (1996), the Manchester bombing (1996), the sinking of the *Marchioness* (1989), Hillsborough (1989), Kings Cross (1987), as well as numerous other tragic events which were impossible to have been predicted.

Many victims and witnesses of violence or injury sustained in accidents; criminal activity or natural disasters such as fires or floods, may well require professional, post-trauma support to help deal with the effects of their experience.

Unfortunately, more and more people are the unwitting victims of violent crime both at work and in the street. For example, a young girl who has a Saturday morning job working in a supermarket and is involved in a raid on the store. She may need as much care and support as the young man who has a serious accident in his firm's van as he carries out his delivery schedule. Yet inevitably, some traumatised individuals are unidentified as such, and can slip through the support net.



## At-risk groups

Whilst all organisations should carry out risk assessments to determine whether employees could be at potential risk of psychiatric harm from events that they may have to deal with in the course of their work, there are some organisations whose staff, by virtue of their work, are always potentially at risk. These include:

- the armed forces and emergency services personnel;
- bank staff and certain others in the financial field;
- those working in retail outlets, off-licence liquor stores and petrol stations, where staff may be alone the premises outside normal shop opening hours or even all night;
- those who have contact with the general public in circumstances where there is a greater risk of violence.

There are also organisations that operate within particular industrial sectors that are inherently hazardous by virtue of the nature of their work; and although good risk management can substantially reduce the incidence of accidents, they may occur at some point in time. In such instances, contingent action plans need to be ready to be implemented, often at short notice, to support those who may be involved.

## Those Affected, Directly And Indirectly, Following An Incident

It is not only those people who are directly involved in an incident, ie victims and survivors, who may suffer the effects of trauma. It can also affect those who may be indirectly involved, eg witnesses, neighbours, families and work colleagues, or those who may be helping with the setting up of emergency shelters or, in some cases, temporary mortuaries. For example, the people who were inadvertently caught up in an incident in Hungerford, Berkshire in 1987, where passers-by witnessed a heavily armed gunman kill 14 people, (including his mother), before taking his own life.

All of these people have the potential to be traumatised, to a greater or lesser degree, including also the emergency services (police, fire and rescue, ambulance and medical staff), clergy, counsellors, social and voluntary workers.

Although victims will inevitably be emotionally unprepared to deal with a sudden emergency or disaster, trained emergency workers will normally be less vulnerable to emotional overload as a result of extensive mental preparation and training for just such eventualities. Nevertheless, this does not preclude them from being affected and possibly traumatised by being involved.

The following are just some examples of how individuals can become directly or indirectly exposed to traumatic incident and possible post-trauma stress:

- Co-workers who may have to return to work immediately following a disaster will have to come to terms with the injuries and possible death of one or more colleagues, together with possible damage to workplace buildings caused by fire, water, etc. The workplace may have changed dramatically and the effect of this may impact on everyone within the organisation, to a greater or lesser extent.
- There may possibly be feelings of guilt associated with injury and loss of life. Management and staff may feel disorientated and emotional following the harrowing experiences of fellow workers, and will be susceptible to post-trauma stress. Employees may have to be relocated to other premises and be in a position of some turmoil for days, or possibly months, thereafter.
- The designated first-aiders within an organisation, who may have had only limited training and experience, will most certainly be called upon to deal with a major incident before the emergency services arrive. Yet the support that they themselves will require, in the aftermath of the event, is often overlooked.

- The train driver who experiences a person committing suicide under the wheels of his train (known as 'one- under'), and the maintenance team who have to remove the human remains from the track. Some of these people will be required to re-live the situation when they give evidence to an enquiry, which can sometimes be months or even years later. This can trigger again the traumatic reaction to the original incident and the person may be unable to 'close the chapter' until all investigations are complete.
- A traumatic incident may impact on the confidence of other employees performing similar jobs within the organisation.
- Proper consideration also should be given to people involved in potential incidents or 'near misses'. These may include people who believe that they came close to a major accident or incident, even where they sustained no actual damage or physical injury, themselves.
- People who are victims of a malicious hoax that gives harrowing images of danger for months that followed. Bonds were formed there that gave hope to all who entered that sanctuary – bonds that confirmed their sense of belonging to a giving, caring community.

## Organisational Responsibility

A problem for an organisation that can arise is when an event in the workplace triggers a powerful adverse reaction in an individual that is compounded by the influence of an external factor or previous event. For example, in one particular case of a workplace fire, an employee, who had recently recovered from a serious illness and was under medication, was hit by a falling beam. It may prove difficult to determine the degree of liability the organisation should accept for the treatment of such a vulnerable employee, when part of the cause is not directly connected with his or her work, but is dependent on individual circumstances.

Employers have a duty to consider the robustness of the person attending for work, irrespective of the cause of their stress. For instance, someone who had just suffered a bereavement should probably not be driving a public transport vehicle.

Organisations have a legal duty of care both towards those who they employ and those who may be affected by their operations. There is a necessity to provide an appropriate level of support in order to discharge that duty. A failure to do so may result in legal proceedings and an award, by a court, of substantial compensation in damages.

## Health And Safety At Work Legislation

The *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* requires employers to do what is reasonably practicable to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees. It does not differentiate between various forms of harm, and that includes a duty to ensure that safe systems of work are set and followed.

The provisions of the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3242)* place a statutory duty on employers to conduct risk assessments both of the actual work carried out by employees in addition to that of the workplace and its environment. These assessments are to enable employers to identify any potential hazards to health, who could be harmed, in what way and how often? The assessment of the extent of risk allows the implementation of appropriate preventive or protective measures, or, alternatively, the complete elimination of the identified hazard.

## Risk Assessment

All employers need to carry out risk assessments to identify any potential risk; whether such risk is significant and what measures should be implemented to prevent or minimise it. This applies to all employers, not just those working in hazardous fields. Risk assessment should focus on the level of risk, the expected type of traumatic incident and the staff roles most likely to be involved.

In many cases when there is a traumatic incident at work, the fact that most people recover naturally could lead the organisation to believe it is unnecessary to provide any form of additional support. However, this is not necessarily the case.

It is therefore essential that organisations design and implement effective systems that will include record keeping and monitoring, both of the causes and the effects of any incident, in addition to the contingent provision of effective support, to employees, following a major incident.

A successful trauma support programme is dependent on the positive attitude of the organisation implementing it and their genuine concern for the welfare of their employees. However, a successful outcome may also be dependent on an employee's perception of the organisation. Does it take seriously the possibility of an accident, or a violent situation occurring, and if so, has the necessary risk assessment taken place and have the appropriate actions been taken?

### A Post-Trauma Support Programme Should Include:

- Careful selection and training of staff who are to work in potentially dangerous or aggressive environments.
- Well-designed emergency procedures and action plans.
- An education programme detailing potential hazards.
- Dedicated on-scene support.
- Professional backup following the incident – aimed at providing short and long-term psychological support, as needed.

## Post-Trauma Support Strategy

It is important that senior management 'buy in' and are committed to, a post-trauma support strategy that it is translated into effective systems, procedures and good practice.

The aims and objectives of the policy should be communicated to everyone, throughout all departments. The policy should allow for ongoing support in respect of any individuals affected through the process of debriefing and any other assistance required in order for them to regain their mental and physical health. This may take days, weeks or months, depending on the severity of the effects, and will entail a qualified assessment either by an external or in-house, professional provider.

The methods of access to the organisation's support services should be conveyed to all employees both before and after any incident, and written information should be available for reference at points throughout each department of the company, firm or local authority.

Following any incident, necessary feedback should be conveyed to the line manager(s) of the affected employee(s), but should not break matters of confidentiality. However, opportunity should be given to employees, where possible, for self-referral to post-trauma support services, eg post-trauma counselling that is independent of line management.

Where an organisation decides to set up in-house trauma support teams, then sufficient time must be allocated to their training, and allowance made for 'time-off' from day-to-day activities to receive regular supervision and ongoing training.

Where the organisation is resourcing external professional support, then the nominated providers should be familiar with the company's activities, in advance, and have sufficient professional capacity and expertise to deal with most eventualities.

In some instances, repercussions of an incident may be felt for many months or even years, and any support programme will need to take this into account, in addition to allowing for the differing needs of affected individuals, both in the long and short-term.

Where legal proceedings are instituted in relation to an incident, these may well run for some years, especially after a major disaster.



## Business Management Issues

Following a major incident an important factor for the organisation will be to contain any damage and disruption to its business activities, whilst ensuring that the working environment is made completely safe and poses no further risk to employees or members of the public. This is particularly relevant in cases of fire, explosion or natural disaster.

The organisation will need to gather detailed evidence from eye witnesses and others, about the incident and to offer support towards all those directly or indirectly involved. This can be a difficult task as it is very easy to be perceived as according first priority to the business, rather than to the employees.

Managers should be aware that a number of different agencies may be involved in any investigation, for example; the Health & Safety Executive ('HSE'), the police, the coroner, as well as the company itself. Individual employees may be interviewed on more than one occasion and it is important not to allow a situation to develop whereby individuals may be made to feel responsible prior to any official report.

## Contingency Planning

Bearing in mind that unexpected disasters can happen at any time, organisations need to have a contingency plan in place to enable them to continue to run their business (albeit at a reduced capacity), in the event of a major disaster that may render their premises partially or totally unusable.

Within an organisation, there needs to be a team of people (from different disciplines) who have access to a critical incident management plan that clearly defines the role of each team member and ensures that the following questions can be answered effectively, in order to avoid future problems:

- Do they have a way of accessing immediately all relevant information that is integral to the working of the organisation? Are there arrangements for back-up copies of electronic and other data to be stored externally in an independent location away from the main site of operations?
- Has identification been made of possible alternative premises for emergency use, or alternatively an agency that would be able to find them suitable temporary accommodation?
- How and from where would replacement computer equipment be obtained at short notice and who would be able to re-install essential files onto any new system?

What contingency arrangements have been made to:

- (i) publicise temporary telephone numbers and replacement communications systems for customers, suppliers and business associates;
- (ii) provide practical support for the workforce such as access and travelling to temporary site, replacement of personal belongings, business equipment, tools etc;
- (iii) provide essential emotional and psychological support for any employee(s) affected by the incident?

The team should review the contingency planning and the control and access of data, at regular intervals and, if necessary, seek expert advice in the field of critical incident management. In specific, high risk areas, such as the City of London, formal training would be appropriate for team leaders who could potentially be caught up in a major incident similar to those that occurred at the Nat West Tower in 1993 or Canary Wharf in 1996.



# Methodologies In The Management Of Trauma Victims

## Defusing

Defusing (a brief informal discussion with an individual or group) should be held within hours of an incident and is most likely to be delivered by a trained manager or supervisor. It will normally last between 30–60 minutes and should be separate from any investigative process. It is often a stand-alone intervention (depending on the nature of the incident) and can also be used for assessment (and sometimes mitigation) of acute symptoms together with acting as a precursor to psychological debriefing to ascertain whether a full debrief is required.

## Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

Formal CISD is recommended to be implemented between 24 and 72 hours subsequent to the incident and be undertaken by trained professionals. This time delay was considered necessary as Mitchell (1983) proposed that emergency workers could suppress psychological reactions for a brief period after an incident as a result of 'training' and would otherwise be too aroused to deal with an in-depth discussion of events.

CISD is run in stages and the debriefer should keep the session open-ended as the different stages can vary in length but an average time would be in the region of 3 hours (including breaks as required). The process enables victims to talk about their experience, normalise their reactions to an event, and receive support and information to reinforce this.

## Trauma Support Model

The trauma support model has been developed by taking into account available research and the experience of professionals in the field. It is intended to be a programme of support that seeks to look after people in the short, medium and longer term; help them to be heard and feel cared for and ensure that those who are most vulnerable to developing psychiatric illness are provided with appropriate therapeutic help.

Individuals practising the trauma support model must be appropriately trained. However, the training need not be at the same level as that required for CISD – where practitioners need to be able to manage and contain intense emotional reactions, either in individuals or in groups, and conform to a prescriptive, structural procedure.

It should also be noted that those who undertake debriefing services should themselves be afforded appropriate support as it can be distressing to listen to the traumas of others. This may entail discussion with colleagues subsequent to each session, but supervision should also be available from a mental health professional such as a counsellor or psychologist. Their experience can be used to answer questions, develop the experience and skills of persons carrying out the debriefing to ensure that the work is not overwhelming.

## Peer Support Groups

Peer support is used by some organisations as a means of utilising work-team members rather than staff having a specialist support function.

Supervision is required for any peer support team, to ensure that they can themselves cope with the emotional demands placed upon them.

## Post-Trauma Counselling

There is a need for organisations to be aware of the type of post-trauma reactions that employees may be experiencing and the symptoms that may be exhibited. It is important to be able to identify changes in behaviour, for example: avoidance or being over-anxious about returning to the place where the incident happened; being unable to talk about the incident or becoming emotionally very detached are often warning signs that after-effects of trauma are being experienced and the individual(s) may need post-trauma counselling support. It may be that the employee has contacted the personnel or occupational health departments (contact us for details of **CSG** services).

## Key Learning Points

- The differing reactions of individuals to traumatic events will vary in both severity and type.
- PTSD is the term commonly used to identify the reactions that some people experience in the aftermath of an extreme incident.
- A diagnosis of PTSD is often difficult – only a small proportion of people will be positively diagnosed. However, many more are likely to experience some traumatic symptoms after the event.
- The provisions of the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* covers the statutory duty of care that applies to the health and safety of all employees and others within the workplace.
- Exposure to traumatic events will vary and employees may suffer from post-trauma symptoms without experiencing PTSD.
- A lack of support and care by the organisation following an incident may cause feelings of anger or frustration in the workforce.
- Managers should be particularly observant of those who have experienced trauma so that any symptoms and reactions are noticed and treated without delay.
- Stress can follow anything from a minor incident to a major disaster and can affect any of those directly or indirectly involved.
- An organisation's crisis management procedure(s) should include all the necessary assistance and support in dealing with an unexpected traumatic incident, including training, identifying those involved, providing all required support and, where applicable, access to professional counselling.
- Where any member of staff is on sick leave absence subsequent to an accident or other distressing event, then managers should keep in regular contact until there has been a return to work.
- Specialist counselling should be provided for those identified as experiencing post-trauma symptoms and they should be given time off work to attend appointments.

(Spiers C, 'Managing Stress in the Workplace' 2003, Tolley's Lexis Nexis ISBN 0 754 51269X)



# Recognising and Managing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Your workplace probably contains quite a mix of trauma survivors, more or less seriously affected, either as victim, witness or perpetrator. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an increasingly-recognised condition, deserving specialist study of its emotional damage and unpredictable effects. Clearly both management and staff should be trained in the urgent psychological debriefing routines that benefit sufferers and those who work with them.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL DEBRIEFING FOR POST-TRAUMA

### Correct handling of shock victims in the short and long term

#### *Two-day public or in-house training programme*

For managers or any other personnel who may be unexpectedly called-on to provide support for people who have experienced or witnessed traumatic incidents

### You gain valuable insight into these key issues

- **Immediate action**  
Psychological first-aid in the hours following a traumatic incident
- **Recognising after-effects**  
Handling known symptoms like delayed shock or denial mode
- **New Trauma Support Model**  
Practical 3-stage programme for defusing post-trauma problems
- **Interviewing and listening**  
Prompting diagnostic clues through empathy and 'active listening'
- **Legal implications**  
Employer's responsibilities, compensation, recent court cases

#### Training methods

The course uses a balanced mix of group and individual exercises together with presentations and group discussions.

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

### DAY ONE

Registration and coffee  
**INTRODUCTION** to the counsellor / trainer and delegates  
Summary of the course and its objectives  
Identification of delegates' needs within the course programme

#### Session One:

#### **DEFINING TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS**

Definition: what is a traumatic incident?  
The potential scale of the problem: costs to the organisation  
Identifying the potential for incidents  
Recognising when incidents have happened and the need for support  
**GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

#### Session Two:

#### **THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS AND PTSD**

Natural and normal reactions  
    Emotional  
    Physical  
    Mental  
Recognising typical immediate individual reactions  
The difference between natural reactions and PTSD  
**GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

#### Session Three:

#### **THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF TRAUMA MANAGEMENT**

Relevant legal provisions  
Responsibilities of employers  
Compensation issues  
Some recent important legal cases  
**PRESENTATION / GROUP DISCUSSION / FEEDBACK**

#### Session Four:

#### **STAFF MANAGEMENT DURING INCIDENTS**

Good management practice  
Providing support on the day  
Appropriate training for the job  
Looking after the welfare of staff  
**PRESENTATION / GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

#### Session Five:

#### **ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS**

The importance of empathy  
The effectiveness of listening well  
The individual skills of active listening  
Putting in all together in an individual interview  
**ROLE PLAY / FEEDBACK**

**Session Six:**

**THE NEW TRAUMA SUPPORT MODEL**

Recent research evidence and what this means for best practice  
The new model  
Initial Stage  
Middle Stage  
Final Stage  
Ongoing support

**PRESENTATION / GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

**Session Seven:**

**THE PRACTICALITIES OF TRAUMA SUPPORT**

Providing immediate support following an incident  
Initial Stage skills including defusing  
Middle Stage skills including running a Trauma Support Session  
Final Stage skills  
Trauma Support Teams  
Follow-up visits and assessing the need for further support  
Use of the screening questionnaire

**TRAUMA SUPPORT SESSION ROLE PLAY / GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

**REVIEW OF THE DAY**

**DAY TWO**

**INTRODUCTION to the day and consolidation on Day One**

**Session Eight:**

**TRAUMA SUPPORT ROLE PLAY CONTINUED**

Continued role plays and group discussion from Session Seven

**Session Nine:**

**SUPPORT ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS**

The importance of managerial involvement  
Manager's skills and linking with other support  
The structure of support by managers

**Session Ten:**

**WORKING WITHIN THE LIMITS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE**

Handling issues of confidentiality and potential conflict between support and management  
Referral: knowing when and where to refer on  
Taking care of those providing support  
Recognising the benefit of peer group support  
Deciding how the organisational response should look  
Identifying and resourcing support  
In-house support/voluntary agencies/support groups/external organisations/professional counselling

**CSG RESOURCES DIRECTORY / GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

**Session Eleven:**

**EVALUATION OF THE TWO-DAY COURSE**

New awareness gained from the course and the importance of commitment and planning  
Developing personal action plans to translate ideas from the course  
**GROUP WORK / FEEDBACK**

**- End of Programme -**



**CAROLE SPIERS GROUP**  
International Stress Management &  
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## **Critical Incident Debriefing, Post Trauma Counselling, Training and Consultancy from CSG –**

**An Established Provider With Over 20 Years Experience  
in the Field of Post Traumatic Stress Management**

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### **Get The Help You Need To Tackle The Effects Of A Critical Incident, Terrorist Actions Or Man-Made Disaster.**

Launched in 1987, the Carole Spiers Group (**CSG**) has established a valuable niche in the field of Post-trauma Stress and Critical Incident Debriefing bringing proven, tangible benefits to a long roll-call of prestige clients such as Abbey, Health Education Authority, Sainsbury's, Rolls Royce, Walt Disney, Panasonic UK, Unilever, the Bank of England and many others over 20 years.

With a nationwide network of nationwide post-trauma debriefers, counsellors, professional consultants and trainers, **CSG** is uniquely equipped to advise professionally on the debriefing of personnel following a critical incident, terrorist attack or man-made disaster.

As an authority on the management of post trauma stress, **CSG** is regularly approached by the BBC and other national media for comment and advice on these important issues, and regularly participates in conferences and seminars both at home and abroad.

Carole Spiers is the author of *Tolley's Managing Stress in the Workplace* – a comprehensive guide to stress management published by LexisNexis UK.

**Contact us now for a detailed proposal or to discuss your post trauma requirements more fully.**

# **'Trauma Strikes When It Likes!' ...**

**So Be Ready For Its Effects**

**With this 2-part Management Training Toolkit**

**By Carole Spiers MIHPE MISMA**

**Trauma Consultant**

*Author of Tolley's 'Managing Stress In The Workplace', The Professional Bible Of Stress Management*

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Powerpoint presentation and workbook on Post-traumatic stress

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- \* **PTSD criteria** \* **Trauma support model**

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For more information on **CSG's** stress management services including in-house & public stress management training, post trauma support, mediation, impartial investigations, nationwide employee counselling team, coaching and mentoring services, please contact us:



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