

**COMMON SIGNS AND SIGNALS OF A STRESS REACTION**  
**- General Public -**

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes someone to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at work or in their private life). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a stressful event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the traumatic event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

*\* definite indication of the need for medical attention*

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL	SPIRITUAL
Chest pain*	Heightened or lowered alertness	Severe panic (rare)	Suspiciousness	
Chills		Agitation	Change in sexual functioning	Believing God is not in control
Difficulty breathing*		Emotional shock	Change in usual communications	Sudden turn toward God
Dizziness	Poor abstract thinking	Intense anger	Pacing	Questioning of one's basic beliefs
Elevated BP	Poor concentration	Fear		Familiar faith practices seem empty (prayer, scriptures, hymns)
Fainting	Nightmares, Intrusive Images			Belief that we have failed God
Fatigue	Blaming someone	Anxiety	Change in activity	Anger at God
Grinding of teeth		Apprehension	Hyper-alert to environment	Sense of isolation (from God, church members)
Headaches	Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people	Depression	Inability to rest	
Muscle tremors	Poor attention	Grief	Withdrawal	Withdraw from church
Nausea	Confusion	Guilt	Change in speech patterns	Feeling distant from God
Profuse sweating	Loss of time, place or person orientation	Irritability	Erratic movements	Anger at clergy
Rapid heart rate	Memory problems	Uncertainty	Loss or increase of appetite	
Shock symptoms*	Disturbed thinking			Believing God doesn't care
Thirst	Hyper-vigilance	Loss of emotional control	Alcohol consumption	Church rituals seem empty (worship, communion)
Twitches	Poor decisions	Denial	Emotional outbursts	Uncharacteristic church involvement
Visual difficulties		Inappropriate emotional response	Antisocial acts	Belief that God is powerless
Vomiting	Increased or decreased awareness of...	...surroundings	Nonspecific bodily complaints	Loss of meaning and purpose
Weakness	Poor problem solving	Feeling overwhelmed	Startle reflex intensified	

