

## One Page Summary: Critical Incident Response for Practitioners

Practitioners often find themselves on the front lines during critical incidents, managing both professional responsibilities and the emotional impact of their work. Prioritising well-being and addressing risks of secondary or vicarious trauma are essential for sustained effectiveness and personal resilience.

### Key Principles for Practitioner Well-Being

#### 1. Acknowledge Emotional Impact

- **Recognise Trauma Exposure:** Understand that witnessing or supporting trauma survivors can affect your emotional health.
- **Validate Feelings:** Accept that stress, sadness, or frustration are normal responses to difficult situations.

#### 2. Create Safe Spaces

- **For Yourself:** Identify trusted colleagues or supervisors to share your concerns and debrief after incidents.
- **For Others:** Foster environments where peers feel safe discussing their experiences.

#### 3. Establish Boundaries

- **Work-Life Separation:** Set clear limits to prevent work from overwhelming your personal life.
- **Manage Expectations:** Recognise what is within your control and let go of unattainable outcomes.

#### 4. Engage in Self-Care Practices

- **Physical Care:** Maintain routines for sleep, nutrition, and exercise to manage stress.
- **Mental Health Support:** Seek professional counselling or use organisational resources if needed.
- **Reflective Practice:** Use journals or peer discussions to process experiences and emotions.

#### 5. Monitor for Secondary or Vicarious Trauma

- **Identify Signs:** Be aware of symptoms like exhaustion, irritability, or detachment.
- **Early Intervention:** Address stressors before they escalate into burnout or compassion fatigue.
- **Peer Support:** Participate in groups focused on shared learning and mutual encouragement.

### Practical Steps for Practitioners

#### 1. Prepare Yourself:

- Attend training on managing trauma exposure and building resilience.

- Familiarise yourself with organisational support systems.

## **2. Act During the Incident:**

- Take brief pauses to centre yourself amid high-pressure situations.
- Use grounding techniques, such as focused breathing, to manage immediate stress.

## **3. Support Recovery:**

- Participate in debrief sessions to process experiences collectively.
- Access follow-up resources, such as mental health services or peer networks.

Practitioners who prioritise their well-being and proactively address the risks of secondary trauma create a foundation for personal resilience and professional excellence, enabling them to better serve their communities.