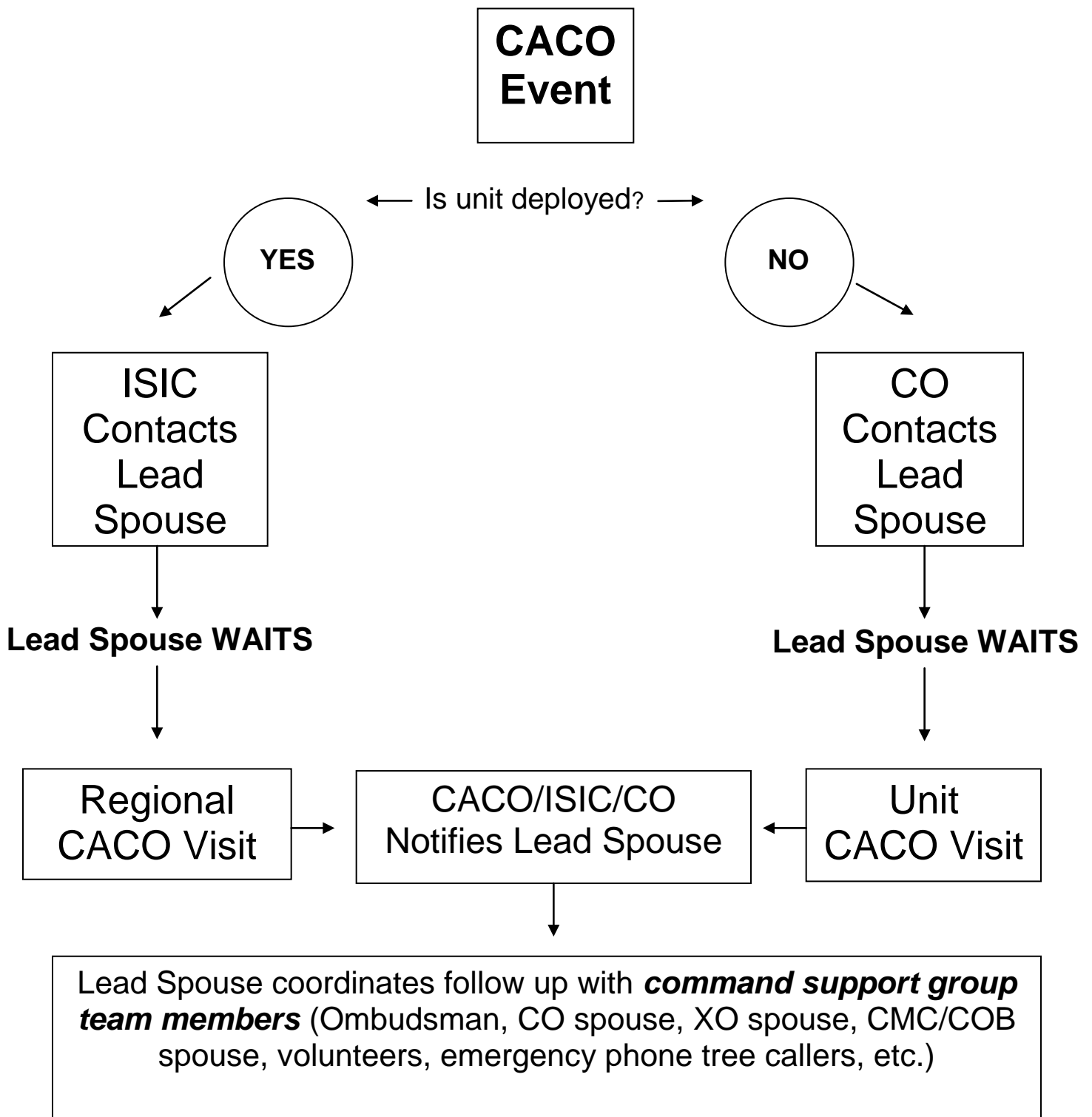


CRITICAL INCIDENT NOTIFICATION TO COMMAND SUPPORT GROUP TEAM MEMBERS



CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INFORMATION SHEET

You have experienced a traumatic event or a critical incident (any incident that causes emergency service personnel to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later). 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 horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or few days later. And, 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 himself or herself.

Here are some very common signs and signals of a stress reaction:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>
Fatigue	Blaming someone	Anxiety	Change in society
Nausea	Confusion	Guiltiness	Change in speech patterns
Muscle tremors	Poor attention	Grief	Withdrawal
Twitches	Poor decisions	Denial	Emotional outburst
Chest pain*	Heightened or lowered alertness	Severe panic (rare)	Suspiciousness
Difficulty breathing*	Poor concentration	Emotional shock	Change in communication
Elevated BP	Memory problems	Fear	Loss or increase in appetite
Rapid heart rate	Hyper-vigilance	Uncertainty	Consumption of alcohol
Thirst	Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people	Loss of emotional control	Inability to rest
Headaches	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Depression	Antisocial acts
Visual difficulties	Poor problem solving	Inappropriate emotional response	Nonspecific bodily complaints
Vomiting	Poor abstract thinking	Apprehension	Hyper alert to environment
Grinding of teeth	Loss of time, place or person orientation	Feeling overwhelmed	Startle reflex
Weakness	Disturbed thinking	Intense anger	Change in sexual functioning
Dizziness	Nightmares	Irritability	Etc.
Profuse sweating	Intrusive images	Agitation	
Chills		Etc.	
Shock symptoms*			
Fainting			
Etc.			

*definite indication of the need for medical evaluation

Things to try:

- WITHIN THE FIRST 24 – 48 HOURS, periods of strenuous physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time – keep busy.
- You're normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself crazy.
- Talk to people – talk is the most healing medicine
- Beware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out – people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible, which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e., if someone asks you what you want to eat - answer them even if you aren't sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).

For Family Members & Friends

- Listen Carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" – traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.

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