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Nine Ways to Respond to a Traumatic Event to Improve Emotional Recovery

"We Can Learn How To Manage Crisis from First Responders," says Dr. Nancy Bohl-Penrod, co-developer of a new app for critical incident stress management.

San Bernardino, CA – People are concerned that a traumatic event could happen without warning at work, school or public place. The recent shootings on [college campuses](#) and the [San Bernardino County Inland Regional Center](#) have taken away a general sense of security. "Our best emotional defense is to know how to help ourselves and others when tragedy strikes. I have seen the results of untreated trauma," says [Nancy K. Bohl-Penrod, PhD](#), who has been dispatched to many critical incidents, including the [San Bernardino terrorist attack](#) on December 2, 2015, to provide mental health services to first responders and citizens. "Left untreated, emotional trauma can surface as symptoms of posttraumatic stress, including anxiety and depression," says Dr. Bohl-Penrod.

"Realistically, police and fire departments need to be in a state of readiness; in fact, they should also be prepared to assist employees with the emotional impact of a crisis. "We developed the [Public Safety/Peer Support/Coach app](#), to make critical incident stress management ([CISM](#)) information more mobile for public safety organizations."

Here are 9 tips to remember following a crisis, according to Dr. Bohl-Penrod:

- 1. Realize that your behavior is a typical reaction to an extraordinary occurrence.** You are not "flipping out" or "acting weird."

2. **Breathe deeply to calm yourself.** Inhale through your nose and exhale as slowly as you can. Shallow breathing keeps one in an anxious state.
3. **Reach out for** spiritual guidance.
4. **Avoid self-medication** with drugs or alcohol.
5. **Don't withdraw.** Seek connection with others to grieve your loss and restore a sense of safety.
6. **Reveal your true feelings** to your spouse, significant other, best friend, neighbor, peer supporter or co-worker. Candidly talking over your reactions can be highly therapeutic.
7. **Avoid deciding on vital matters** when you are under undue stress. Instead, ask your spouse or other family members to help make important decisions.
8. **Try to get plenty of sleep and exercise.** Walking or running can relieve stress.
9. **Seek help from a mental health professional.** If a counselor is available at the time of the incident, let him/her know you need help. The signs and symptoms of critical-incident stress are subtle and often delayed. Early intervention may reduce long-term effects.

“When people master coping techniques, they have a greater likelihood of long-term emotional balance and wellness,” says, Dr. Bohl-Penrod.

The Public Safety/Peer Support/ Coach app is available on [iTunes](#) and [Google Play](#).

About TCTI and Nancy K. Bohl-Penrod, Ph.D.

Nancy K. Bohl-Penrod, Ph.D. is the Founder/Director of TCTI. She is also an Internationally recognized authority in the emotional effects of trauma and critical incident stress management. She has responded to multiple incidents including the [Seal Beach hair salon mass shooting](#) (2011), [Christopher Dorner case](#) (2013), [Esperanza Fire](#) (2006) and [San Bernardino Terrorist Attack](#) (2015).

The Counseling Team International (TCTI) has provided employee assistance support services to law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, governmental agencies

and private industry since 1985. TCTI has fifteen (15) offices located throughout Southern California. For more information, log onto: <http://www.thecounselingteam.com>

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