

Aims:

- To raise awareness of what critical incidents are, including a focus on grief, loss, transition and suicide.
- To provide some practical steps for a sports chaplain to deal with these situations

NOTE: these topics may bring emotions of grief – speak to someone about these emotions right away.

Disclaimer: This training is to raise awareness of how to serve in critical incidents and crises and does NOT qualify you to be a professional in this field.

What is a Critical Incident?**Definition:**

A critical incident is an emergency situation that has significance for a person and causes them to experience unusually strong thoughts, emotions and/or physical effects which have the potential to interfere with their ability to cope, either at the scene or later. Critical incident stress management (CISM) values, recognizes and normalizes one's reaction to an abnormal event.

(Taken from: Sports Chaplaincy New Zealand training)

What would you consider to be a critical incident? List some examples:

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A critical incident is often the gateway for a sports chaplain into a sporting community or team.

This session is designed to help you respond after a critical incident.

Chaplains' response plan:

During times of grief & loss, chaplains will have different levels of response and involvement:



Edges – you provide pastoral care from a distance, perhaps through a note or card.

Supportive involvement – you take the initiative or are asked to be involved.

Incident oversight – you are asked to take the lead in the response.

Know your sports team’s standard response plan in critical incidents.

Evaluate your place or fit:

- What relationship do I have with key people?
- After conversation with the decision makers... what involvement have they invited?
- What’s expected of me/the chaplain?
- What “gaps” are there for me to fit into?

Application:

Reflection/Discussion task:

Think of a critical incident that could happen in your sporting community.

- What is the situation?
- How would you respond at each level of possible chaplain involvement?

Watch the following video clip. What is the critical incident, and what was the response?

Derek Redmond at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2G8KVzTfw>

Critical Incident Considerations at Major Events

When at a Major Event, the following steps are important when preparing or dealing with a critical incident:

- Preparation of Organisers
- List of contacts – knowledge of resources
- Inclusion in composition of chaplaincy team
- Clarity of situation
- Mobilising prompt, appropriate responses
- Opportunity for remembrance
- A place of counsel and contemplation
- Cooperation with other Athletes Village services

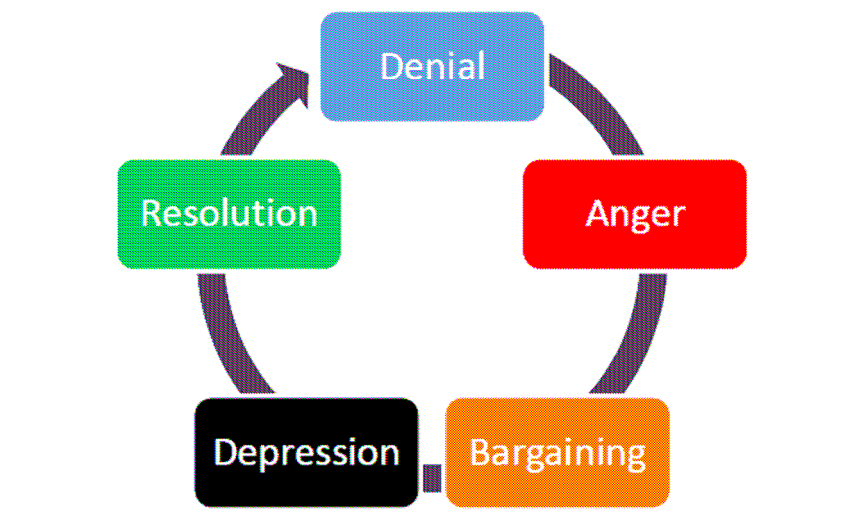
Grief / loss / transition / suicide

1. How would you define grief?
2. What emotions do you associate with grief?
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3. When may grief / loss occur for a sports person and their community?
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4. How do people respond?

Grief, loss and transition may occur for a sports person when they experience the following situations:

- Death of a loved one
- Abuse
- Long term illness
- Bankruptcy/Finance
- Kids leaving home
- Parents sick
- Coaching transitions
- Suicide
- Critical incident
- Failure
- End of career
- Injury breakdown
- Combat experiences

Stages of grief: Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969)



Grief responses:

Physical	Emotional	Social	Behavioural	Spiritual
e.g. Tiredness,	Emotional swings	Overly sensitive	Difficulty concentrating, slowed thinking	Doubting belief system
e.g. Tightness in the throat	Sadness	Avoiding others	Wandering aimlessly	Questioning spiritual values
e.g. change in appetite	Meaninglessness	Dependent	Sense of unreality or emptiness	Spiritual injury
	Anger, Irritability Panic, Anxiety	Withdrawn		Loss of faith

Providing Pastoral Care

Helpful	Harmful
• Be present.	• Trying to answer big questions.
• Allow people a safe place by being calm.	• Trying to answer 'why?'
• Listen, listen, listen.	• Feeling that you need to 'fix' grief.
• Help them understand that their grief response is normal.	• Saying 'I know how you feel.'
• Ask questions.	• Making dramatic or emphatic statements.
• Help them to express their loss.	• Shutting down expressions of emotion.

Be intentional with what you ask.

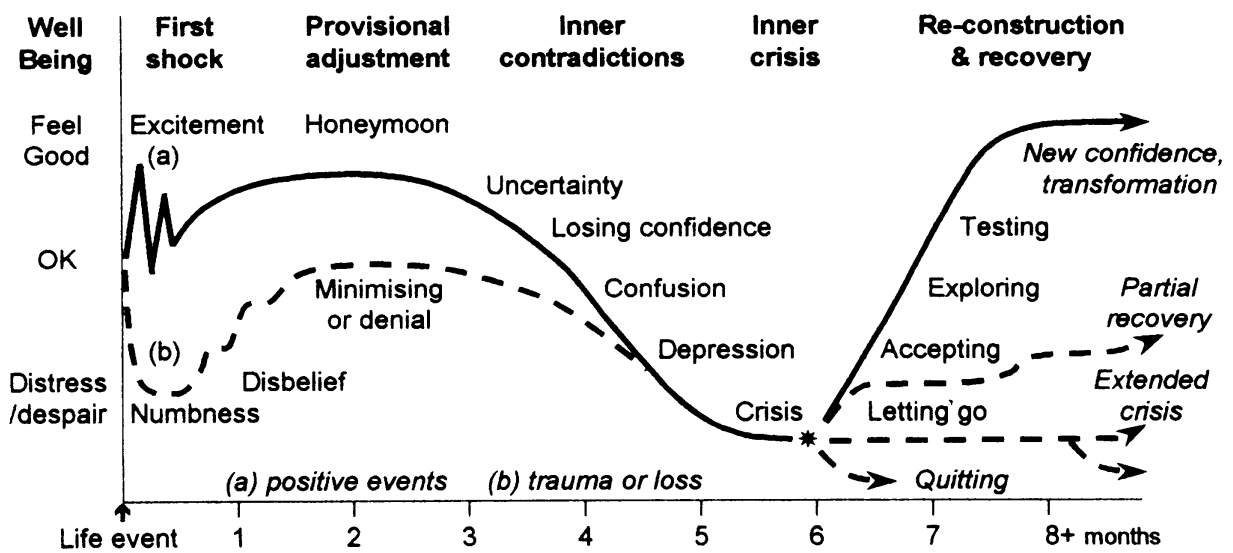
Action steps: 4 strategies in times of loss:

1. **Accept** the reality of the loss.
2. **“Wear the pain”** of the loss – experience it, talk about it.
3. **Learn to adapt** to life after loss – adjust spiritually, emotionally, physically, cognitively, and practically.
4. **Re-engage** with and invest into life.

Think of ways you can help a person through the 4 strategies in times of loss.

Transition:

Change and transition is part of life. Every person goes through the stages of transition at different times. The graph below shows the most common stages of transition and various responses to the original life event.



Taken from: <http://www.eoslifework.co.uk/futures.htm#F1>

Suicide awareness

Note: This training is to raise awareness of suicide prevention and does NOT qualify you to be a professional in this field. Refer people to a professional as soon as possible.

Legal obligation: Be aware that in many parts of the world, you are legally bound to report and to refer people who you know are considering suicide.

1. What signs of suicide should you look out for?
2. How can you, as a chaplain, respond?

Signs:

1. High risk groups
2. Depressive loss or change leading to depression
3. Lethality
4. Alarm – how serious is the threat?
5. Explain consequences – how it affects others – awareness / precautions / warning signs to avoid getting to this point

Ask:

1. Ask directly: “Are you suicidal?”
2. If ‘yes’ what other questions should you ask?
3. Negotiate the most appropriate way to help.

Help:

1. Police, ambulance
2. Referral

Some resources:

- a) Your local or national Suicide Prevention website or helpline.
- b) Suicide Prevention Information New Zealand website www.spinz.org.nz
- c) Lifeline 0800 543 354
- d) Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757
- e) Youthline 0800 376 633 (or text 234)
- f) Samaritans (see your local white pages for listings)

g) Your local doctor, medical centre or community mental health team

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 – We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed.

Acknowledgement:

The content of this module was given with compliments of Sports Chaplaincy New Zealand.

For further information go to: www.sportschaplaincy.co.nz.