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Immediately after a crisis...

Acknowledge the reality of the crisis event, by naming the incident and the student(s), who are the primary victims.

Ask about the students' experience and thoughts, demonstrating empathy and if appropriate share your own feelings.

Be observant and communicate clearly and factually to the student(s) in a calm and reassuring tone.

Be patient - you may have to repeat things as students may be in shock – offer 'bite size' pieces of information.

Remember it is all right to say, "I (we) don't know that yet"

Be honest, answer questions clearly and simply and/or agree to 'find out'.

In the following days

Staff in close and regular contact can contribute to a student's recovery by providing routine, structure and ongoing encouragement.

It is important to remember that we all have natural ways of coping and specialist support or counselling is usually not appropriate straight away and may disrupt a student's normal coping skills.

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Remember Self-care

- Be aware of your own thoughts and feelings
- Talk to and take support from someone you trust
- Make time for yourself
- Build in treats for yourself
- Take support from your line manager, Staff Wellbeing/Occ. Health
- And/or contact Inspire for confidential counselling support
Tel: 0808 800 0002 (staff)

Contact:

Student Wellbeing Team

Opening Hours

| | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Monday to Thursday | 08:45 to 17:00 |
| Friday | 08:45 to 16:00 |

Campus

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Belfast | BA-02-034 |
| Coleraine | E023 |
| Jordanstown | 15G20 |
| Magee | MG108G |

Tel: 028 9536 7000
 Email: studentwellbeing@ulster.ac.uk
 Web: ulster.ac.uk/wellbeing

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If you are concerned about a student's behaviour, discuss it with the student or refer them to the Student Wellbeing team on your campus. You can also discuss your concerns with colleagues and/or consult staff in the Student Wellbeing team. (See 'Guidance on Responding to a Student In Distress')

It is normal for you to feel anxious about how students will cope after a critical incident. The university Critical Incident Response will comprise of staff from Student Wellbeing and other services to provide support to students immediately following the crisis incident. Usually this stabilises and deescalates students, enabling them to process events and to recover.

Occasionally some students do require additional specialist help and ongoing wellbeing support. If (2- 4 weeks) after a critical incident you are concerned about changes in a student's behaviour or ability to cope, refer to Guidance on Responding to A Student In Distress and:

- Discuss your concerns with the student
- Signpost or refer the student to Student Wellbeing.
- Consult with Student Wellbeing staff if required.

When something unexpected and distressing happens...

What staff can do to help!

This leaflet explains how students may react to a crisis or traumatic incident and how staff can help restore a student's sense of safety and normal recovery by responding in a calm, caring, confident manner.

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Every student's response to a 'critical incident' is individual and is influenced by the following:

- their involvement or exposure to the crisis or traumatic event,
- their relationship to the primary victim(s)
- their previous history or experience of crisis, loss or trauma
- their individual wellbeing immediately before the incident.

Staff play an important role, providing 'Psychological First Aid' to reduce students' initial stress symptoms. This involves:

- Practical care to meet a student's basic needs
- A 'safe supportive space' away from the scene of events
- Calming emotional support and listening to acknowledge the event
- Reassurance to normalise the students physical and emotional 'distress'
- Help and support to regain a sense of safety.

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Physical and psychological reactions

Normal feelings and emotions in immediate response to traumatic events are both psychological and physical and may include:

Shock, denial, sadness, anger, fear, guilt, despair and anxiety. They may also appear shocked or unable to feel anything at all.

Students may feel physically tired, unable to sleep and experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches, cold, loss of appetite and/or lack concentration.

Staff can meet students' needs by providing warm drinks and food in a safe, comfortable emotionally supportive environment.

The crisis event may trigger memories of other losses or traumatic events. Some students may display avoidance behaviour or appear reluctant to talk about what has happened and how they are.