

## **HOW TO HELP THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT**

(For families of individuals who have been in a traumatic event)

1. Encourage the person(s) affected by the incident to talk to you about how he or she is feeling about the incident.
2. Tell the person(s) affected how you feel (e.g. that you are sorry they have been hurt).
3. It is okay to remind the person(s) affected that their confusing feelings are normal.
4. Don't attempt to reassure the person(s) affected that everything is okay. At this moment, everything does *not* seem okay.
5. Do not attempt to impose your explanation of why this has happened on the person(s) affected.
6. Don't tell the person(s) affected you know how he or she feels because you don't. Often such attempts are really aimed at relieving your own anxiety about how *you* feel about the incident.
7. Be willing to say nothing. Just being there is often the biggest help.
8. Don't be afraid to encourage the person(s) affected to get post-trauma counseling from a specially trained mental health professional.
9. If the person affected agrees, go to any court hearings, investigations, meetings with insurance companies, etc. which relate to the event.
10. Don't be afraid to ask how someone is doing. This provides the opportunity for the person(s) affected to tell you as much or as little as needed.
11. Remember that as a person who cares for the person(s) affected in a traumatic event, *you* are affected too. You must also expect that you will experience some post-trauma consequences.

\* Adapted from Critical Incident Stress handouts used throughout the U.S.