

Critical Incident Support:

Psychosocial and Islamic Response for Muslim Communities

Definition

A *critical incident* refers to any sudden, traumatic event that overwhelms an individual or community's ability to cope, such as a student or staff death, a violent act, suicide attempt, serious injury, or exposure to traumatic content (e.g., war footage).

Immediate Response – What to Do First

- **Ensure physical safety:** If the incident involves immediate danger, call emergency services. Remove others from harm's way.
- **Contain the situation:** Limit exposure to details. Avoid graphic descriptions. For example, after a suicide attempt, focus on stabilising those nearby and avoid discussing the method.
- **Provide Psychological First Aid (PFA):** Be present, calm, and offer comfort. Say, "You're not alone right now. I'm here with you. Let's sit down somewhere safe."
- **Designate a quiet spiritual space:** Offer a calm room for prayer, reflection, and grounding. Encourage the use of dhikr, such as "*HasbunAllahu wa ni'mal wakeel.*"

Early Intervention – The Next 24-72 Hours

- **Ensure physical safety:** Explain that shock, confusion, crying, anger, or even numbness are normal responses to abnormal events. "You may feel shaken for days. That doesn't mean you're weak – it means you're human."
- **Debrief safely and gently:** Provide structured debriefs with a psychologist or chaplain. Allow group members to express reactions without being forced to re-tell traumatic content.
- **Incorporate Islamic meaning-making:** Use Qur'anic framing

"Every soul shall taste death..." (Qur'an 3:185)

"Indeed, with hardship comes ease." (Qur'an 94:6)

Follow-Up Actions

- Offer ongoing support check-ins over the following weeks.
- Refer to Afiya EAP counselling
- Provide healing events (e.g., remembrance gatherings or reflective khutbahs).