



Protocol 7: Support Plan

Firefighters, go through this seven-step plan with your loved ones to help them understand what you need when you're dealing with the emotional fallout from experiencing a traumatic critical incident.

Once you've filled in the information below and walked through it with your loved ones, save it in a place you and your family can access. Then, deciding whether to use the Protocol 7: Support Plan is simple: On a scale of 0-10, (10 = the highest distress you've ever experienced), **if you are a 7 or above, use the plan.**

1 — RESET. After experiencing a critical incident, it is helpful for me to be able to:

Examples: Tinker in the garage for two hours • Go to bed • Go for a run • Talk it out

2 — STAY CONNECTED. Let this bring you closer, not farther apart. Words are not the only way to feel support. One way my partner/roommate/parent/friend can help me is:

Examples: Bring me a glass of ice water • Give me a hug with no words • Have the kids play quietly so I can rest. Then, when I approach you later, I may want to talk • Respond to texts and phone calls for me

If you chose to talk, consider the following:

- Details of the event aren't necessary. Focus on what you are **feeling, thinking, and experiencing.**
- Don't say "I'm fine" when you aren't; they're smarter than that. If you don't give them something their brain will try to figure out what it might be and they'll assume that they are the problem.
- Your loved ones want to help. Being helpless is excruciating when someone you love is in pain. So give them something — anything that might be a comfort even if it is just a glass of water and then alone time.

3 — KIDS ARE MORE RECEPTIVE THAN WE THINK. Giving them some thing to do with their concern is a gift we can give them. One way my kids can help me is:

Examples: Bring me a Coke • Give me a hug • Play quietly to help me relax my body • Help with dinner • Tell me about the last time we had fun together • Play video games with me • Tell me "_____"

4 — ESTABLISH A CODE WORD OR PHRASE that indicates that a call was exceptionally hard. When I have had a critical event that I need to refresh myself from I will text, or verbally say "_____". This means initiating Protocol 7: Support Plan will be helpful.

MY CODE WORD/PHRASE: _____

Examples: I'm not good • 7 • Pineapple • Get the plan out

5 — USE A PREDETERMINED STATEMENT for incoming texts/phone calls.

Example: Thank you for checking on me. It was a difficult day for everyone involved. I am safe and taking some time to relax. I'm not able to talk about it but your concern is appreciated.

6 – REASSURE ME that it may take up to 24 hours for physical signs of adrenaline/stress to dissipate and three days to two weeks for my brain to settle and return to my normal baseline.

Normal Acute-Stress/Adrenaline-Overload Symptoms:

INITIAL 24 HOURS	WITHIN 72 HOURS	WITHIN 1-2 WEEKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxiety• Fidgetiness• Irritability• Anger• Impulsiveness• Large startle reflex• Poor sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subsiding physical symptoms• Preoccupation with event• Self doubt• Replaying event• Blame• Guilt• Rapid thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return to baseline• “Making peace with it”• Returned sleep cycle• Returned social connection• Returned sense of purpose• Problem Solving• Baseline energy levels

While the effects of adrenaline are normal for the first 24 hours, it may be hard to experience. Please guard your heart against anything I may say or do while on an adrenaline high. I love you more than I can show during that time.

_____ (First Responder, please initial for acknowledgment)

7 – ENCOURAGE ME TO SEEK HELP IF my distress lasts longer than one week, you fear for my safety, or I am using alcohol/substances in excess.

Some helpful options might be:

(Fill out as many as possible. Check my preferred options):

- Reach out to a Peer Team Member
- Call MnFIRE Assistance Program for mental health support • Phone #: 888-784-6634
- Call 988 for free and immediate mental health support
- Text “HOME” to 741741 to speak to a volunteer crisis counselor
- Call my established therapist • Phone #: _____
- Contact a colleague or mentor • Name and phone #: _____
- Other: _____

If you are unsure if the event you just experienced warrants use of this plan, consider this: On a scale of 0-10, (10=the highest distress you’ve ever experienced), if you are a 7 or above, use the plan.



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