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**The Exposure of Athletic Trainers to Critical Incidents and Traumatic Events and the Need for Peer-to-Peer Support in the Aftermath**

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2  **A normal day in the life.....**3  **And then...**4  **What is a critical incident?**5  **Events that would constitute a critical incident are not the same for everyone**6  **We can all agree that this is a critical incident.**7  **Larger scale events:**

- Fires
- Floods
- Earthquakes
- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Multiple injury/fatality accidents
- Large scale environmental pollution
- Terrorism
- Acts of war
- Child related traumatic events
- Homicides in the community
- High publicity crimes of violence or sex
- Community disasters
- Being an emergency worker/first responder in critical incidents and disasters (Police, Fire, EMS etc)<sup>1</sup>

8  **WE ARE TRAINED TO HANDLE THINGS LIKE**9  **Smaller scale crises**

**(The things we are more likely to deal with)**

- Automobile accident, or any accident involving serious injury and/or property damage
- Sudden or unexpected death of a relative, friend or colleague
- Child abuse and/or injury or death of a child
- Sexual assault/abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Industrial accidents involving serious injuries or fatalities
- Robbery and violent crimes
- Domestic violence
- Suicide or attempted suicide

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- Domestic violence
- Suicide or attempted suicide
- Homicide(s)
- Line of duty death or injury among emergency/law enforcement personnel
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#### 10 **Smaller scale crises**

##### **(The things the AT is more likely to see on a regular basis)**

- Emotional and psychological effects of significant injury to oneself or a teammate.
- “Life Crises” such as:
  - Personal or family illness
  - Break-ups
  - Trouble in school
  - Social issues
- “Sport Crises” such as:
  - Getting cut from a team
  - Playing time
  - Problems with the coach
  - Problems with teammates.
- Coaches and/or other staff issues:
  - Team related problems
  - Problems with parents
  - Personal problems (i.e. health, family, etc.)

#### 11 **What the literature says about the value of CISM and peer-to-peer support**

##### SUPPORT

- Many studies report that it is an effective crisis intervention tool.
- Anecdotal and perception reports indicate that recipients of PFA and CISM interventions believe it to be helpful.
- Peer support appears to be helpful in processing traumatic events.
- Evidence of positive personal changes and behaviors after participating in peer support
- PFA and CISM provides a mechanism to identify need for additional mental health services or support.
- PFA suitable for a wide range of traumatic incidents
- PFA strategies are suitable for use by mental health professionals and lay responders.
- Helps minimize effects of the traumatic event.
- Some level of support and/or intervention may be required after witnessing an athletic injury

##### QUESTIONS

- Research to document effectiveness affected by critiques of scientific rigor, but there is no evidence to withhold its use
- Criticisms of studies reporting effectiveness of CISM and peer-support identify potential issues with study design and study rigor.

#### 12 **Have You Been Affected by Someone Else’s Traumatic Event?**

Vicarious trauma can happen to anyone. Those who are at particular risk include people who witness (directly or indirectly through the media) accidents, assaults or natural disasters; family or friends of loved ones who are affected by military actions; humanitarian workers; journalists; clergy; first responders such as police or firefighters; and health care workers including counselors.

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### 13 **Why?**

Unlike “regular” trauma, when the threat comes from the outside such as an injury, near drowning, or assault, the threat in vicarious trauma comes from within. There are several sources of threat when you witness or hear about another person’s traumatic event. These include:

- your body’s reaction to horror
- your body’s reaction to shock when you learn that something bad happened to someone good or innocent
- your sense of helplessness when you think that what you can do for another is not enough to alleviate their pain

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### 14 **Who Is At Risk of Vicarious Trauma?**

Some factors that influence whether you will experience vicarious trauma include:

- The degree to which you are emotionally connected to the other person who is hurt or frightened.
- Your ability to nurture yourself through self-care, rest, and play
- Your ability to engage in a supportive community
- Your personal trauma history
- Your perception of how much your actions help those in need

### 15 **Can it happen to me?**

### 16 **Can it happen to me?**

### 17 **So we endeavored to find out what the membership thinks**

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- Invitations to participate in the on-line survey were sent to the 25,773 certified/licensed athletic trainer members of the NATA who had not previously opted out of receiving surveys.
- There were 5,642 respondents to the survey-yielding a 22% response rate.

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- The following participant information was collected:
  - Gender
  - Age range
  - NATA district

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### 24 **How are Athletic Trainers Impacted by Critical Incidents?**

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24 **Critical Incidents?**25  1

26  **What do  
Athletic Trainers do to deal with  
Critical Incidents?**

27 28 29 30  631  732  833  934 35  12

36  **So....we analyzed the results  
and  
came to some conclusions**

- Something needs to be done to support Athletic Trainers when unexpected critical incidents happen.
- There is a need for a formalized program and support network.
- There is a need to train Athletic Trainers in peer-support and crisis intervention.
- There is a need for a coordinated peer-support network for our profession.
- Our answer was.....

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38  **What is ATs Care?**

The mission of ATs Care is to aid athletic trainers in the aftermath of a catastrophic incident or death occurring to one or more of their athletes or colleagues by establishing a peer-to peer-system to assist, monitor, and encourage these individuals to seek initial support through state or regional athletic training care teams.

The ATs Care program is in place to provide the following resources:

- Education for athletic trainers about CISM, post-traumatic stress and their effects both in the workplace and in one's personal life.
- Psychological and emotional support to athletic trainers through on-scene support, demobilization intervention, post-incident defusing or one-on-one interaction.
- A network of athletic trainers trained in CISM and psychological first-aid to serve as a resource for Athletic Trainer CISM teams.

39  **CORE PRINCIPALS OF**

- Commitment to confidentiality

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- Commitment to confidentiality
- Rapid response to appropriate requests for support.
- Emphasis on the importance of providing peer support services using athletic trainers.
- Education and support services in keeping with ICISF guidelines.
- ATs Care is able to provide and support immediate crisis intervention. ATs Care is not intended to replace professional counseling or mental health services.

40  **Who is ATs Care?**

The ATs Care Committee is comprised of athletic trainers who have been specially trained in Crisis Intervention and Stress Management techniques and who work in conjunction with Mental Health Professionals who specialize in providing support to healthcare professionals.

41  **What happens when I may need someone to talk to?**

- Many times ATs Care or your local CISM team becomes aware of an incident involving an AT via
  - a phone call from a colleague
  - a Google alert
  - the news
- A member of the peer-support team will usually reach out to the affected AT and/or AT staff to inform them of the peer-support program and offer their assistance.
- If the involved AT wishes to utilize peer-support services, then additional communication continues.
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42  **What if something happens to one of my friends tomorrow?  
What should I do?**

- Take a breath and collect your thoughts
- Make sure he/she is safe
- Encourage them to be sure their basic needs are met, like eating and sleeping
- Acknowledge their situation
- LISTEN
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43 44  **What CISM-Peer Support is not.**45  **Peer-support and CISM Teams and Resources**46  **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

2017

- Informational sessions at all 10 District meetings.
- Training of core ATs Care committee members in CISM for individuals and groups.
- Formulation of policies and procedures for the CISM team.
- Complete a plan for education and training for the membership.
- ICISF training at 2017 NATA Symposium in Houston- Assisting Individuals in Crisis.
- Development and implementation of a resource network for Athletic Training CISM teams at the district and state levels.
- Train a network of Athletic Trainer instructors in both individual and group CISM.

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- Train a network of Athletic Trainer instructors in both individual and group CISM.
- Support local teams in providing peer support services using athletic trainers.
- Education and support services in keeping with ICISF guidelines.
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2018

- ICISF training at all 10 district meetings Assisting Individuals in Crisis.
- Help to train and support district or state groups in formation of local CISM/Peer Support teams.
- Develop and deliver continuing education for Athletic Trainers on CISM/Peer Support related topics.
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