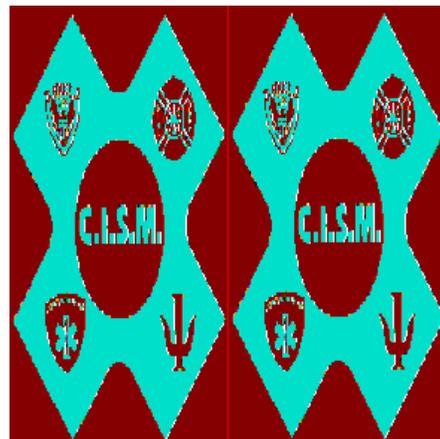


Building Resilience, Preparedness and Support

CRISIS INTERVENTION & STRESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL

Public Health
Seattle & King County 



Helping the Helper Help

King County Emergency Medical Services
Community Programs and Education
Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Preface

This lesson was written to give emergency services professionals; those who work with persons in adversity and crisis the techniques to better serve them. Sometimes these individuals can be co-workers, family members or even ourselves. This lesson will teach a better understanding of how the intangible “stress” affects a person, how resilience and psychological first aid techniques can help.

The King County CISM Program and the Crisis Intervention Stress Management Team was established with the goal of ***Helping the Helper Help***. Because emergency services professional’s work in situations that have high risk for psychological impact, there is a great need for these public servants to have systems that support wellness and mechanisms to lessen the impact of crisis and stress.

In the last 20 years, much has been learned about stress in the emergency services. This discovery subsequently led to the advent of a critical incident stress assistance movement. Mental health professionals, who in the past were often avoided by the emergency services professional, teamed up with emergency service professionals to cooperately address the impact of occupational stress. Emergency professionals became educated as psychological para-professionals; mental health experts brought new approaches of addressing the affects of cumulative and incident specific stress. This lesson is an extension of the comprehensive behavioral wellness mission.

The King County EMS Division ~ CISM Program is committed to the public health model of ***Primary Prevention*** (stress management education and increasing resilience), ***Secondary Prevention*** (mitigation of extreme stressors and crisis intervention), ***Tertiary Prevention*** (follow-up referrals for higher level of support care). Such support systems have been developed:

- Initial employment psychological screening criteria for emergency services
- Education in basic stress management principals and self care
- Identification, development and use of personal support systems
- Establishment and administrative support of agency based peer support systems
- Encouragement for human resource support systems (i.e. chaplains, EAP)
- Crisis and incident specific stress intervention
- Referral to behavioral professionals
- Post incident follow-up and stress surveillance

A personal statement:

As someone who has worked in emergency services profession for 28 years, as an emergency dispatcher, a commissioned police officer and now as a firefighter/paramedic for the past 21 years, I believe the emergency services profession deals with the abnormalities of society and by the nature of what we do can, in extreme situations, disable us physically and even mentally. I have been a long time supporter of mechanisms that build the professional stronger and serve them when the pressure or stress impeded their performance or interferes with their personal lives and family relationships. What emergency service professionals must continue to do is live as healthy as possible, not take life too seriously, take care each other and when they are overwhelmed by whatever the cause, seek out a professional who has their personal and professional life at interest.

Ronald W. Quinsey, PM
King County CISM Program Manager

Application of Skill(s):

Interactive Discussion

Class Length:

1 to 2 Hours
1/2 hour may be devoted to supervisors

Equipment:

High Tech :
Computer, and speakers & LCD Projector
Powerpoint Slides with music
(optional) Video Player :
Pulse ~ King County CISM & Mock CISD
CBS 48 Hours : Under The Gun

Handouts:

King County C.I.S.M. Education for Emergency Services Personnel
Stress Management for Emergency Services Personnel
King County CISM Program Brochure(s)

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Class Objectives

Upon completion the student will be able to:

- 1. List elements of stress in the emergency services profession**
- 2. Understand how a balanced lifestyle reduces the impact from incident specific stress reactions and it may increase resilience**
- 3. List common signs and symptoms associated with stress**
- 4. Understand situations in which critical incident stress may develop**
- 5. List the resources available to help with stress reactions**
- 6. Discuss the different services provided by the King Co. EMS C.I.S.M. Team**

Statement of Position for Crisis Intervention & Stress Management

In 1985 a group of emergency service professionals, public safety administrators, public health administrators and regional mental health professionals gathered together because they recognized the need to better support emergency service professionals exposed to both chronic and critical incident stress in their jobs. They further recognized that this exposure causes significant emotional reactions that could impact their ability to function effectively on the job. Traditional crisis intervention services, pre-incident information and training, and mental health services were not being utilized by emergency responders. In 1987 police, fire, medical and mental health professionals volunteered to address this need and established the King County CISM Program.

The King County CISM program integrates a public health model, crisis intervention, general stress management and the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's (ICISF) CISM model. The King County Public Health mission is to achieve and sustain healthy people and healthy communities throughout the county by providing services which promote health and prevent disease. The ICISF's CISM model was successful in pairing emergency service professionals with mental health professionals to develop better access to the above services.

CISM services are that are provided by peer emergency service professionals and mental health professionals to emergency service personnel and their families include:

1. **Prevention (Primary)** – To increase the ability to recover from extreme stress, by educating workers about healthy self care and daily stress management techniques so they have a strong healthy foundation. To support emergency responders by assisting individual agencies in developing peer support programs.

- ❖ Team members are available to provide onsite assessment and personnel support.
- ❖ Pre-incident agency training/education programs are available to command, emergency service professionals and their families to:
 - 1) Identify occupational stressors;
 - 2) Describe CISM services;
 - 3) Provide information about typical human responses to stress;
 - 4) Identify and encourage existing and new support systems, coping skills and resources available to emergency service personnel.
- ❖ Support in developing peer support programs for interested departments.

2. **Prevention (Secondary)** – To lessen the impact of exposure to extreme stressors by providing crisis intervention, debriefings, defusings immediately after exposure to a critical incident.

- ❖ Provide “psychological first aid” and on-site incident support services (defusings)
- ❖ Offer post-incident interventions (psychological debriefings) to:
 - 1) acknowledge possible or existing traumatic reactions to an event;
 - 2) Stabilize and education about the impact of acute signs of distress following exposure to an event;
 - 3) Assist emergency service professionals to evaluate their own responses and how it may be effecting their effectiveness at work;
 - 4) Encourage workers to use their peers as support by increasing discussion about an event and sharing their experiences;
 - 5) Encourage workers to use social, emotional and professional resources available to them;

3. **Prevention (Tertiary)** – Provide follow up referrals when the emergency service professional's self care system is overwhelmed and the usual crisis intervention and debriefing models are not enough.

- ❖ Mental Health Professionals trained in the needs of emergency service professional are available to refer workers to professional psychological treatment in their community.
- ❖ Team coordinators provide follow-up agency consultation and referral to available mental health resources.

The Faces of Stress – Good, Bad & Ugly

What is Stress?

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. Stress can motivate us to take action in life. It can be debilitating if it becomes chronic and if we don't have the built-in resources and skills to handle it. Stress is both a necessary and potentially debilitating experience.

We need enough stress (*Eustress*) to keep us motivated to accomplish things in our lives, e.g.: bills we need to pay motivates us to go to work, boredom motivates us to take up activities. Too much stress (*Distress*) can overload us and cause a variety of emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual reactions, if left unresolved (*Chronic Stress*) can, in affect, disable us and contribute to our death.

Eustress

Eustress occurs when we have healthy, positive coping mechanisms to deal with daily life stressors. It motivates us to do things that enhance life. It helps us maintain our health, learn new things take on new challenges in life. It is what gives the athlete their competitive edge and drive to be successful.



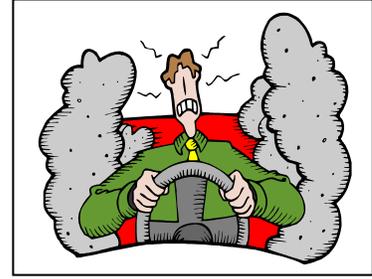
Distress

Distress occurs when coping mechanisms become overwhelmed, when stress becomes chronic and unresolved, when we don't do daily activities that regenerate our coping skills or live a lifestyle that debilitates us. Distress causes poor concentration, irritability, interferes with sleep, changes in appetite, causes people to feel separate or alone, it upsets our life balance.



Sources of Stress (Distress)

Stress in our life can show up in different ways and at different times. How we feel about ourselves and how we look at the world can increase or decrease the impact of distress.



Physical or Environmental – Law enforcement and communications (9-1-1 dispatchers) officers understand the affects of sitting all shift, corrections officers and nurses who could be on their feet all day end their shift feeling the physical effects of the job. Firefighters can suffer hyperthermia, heat stress. Sickness is a physical stress.

Top Stressors

1. Death of spouse
2. Divorce
3. Marital separation
4. Jail term
5. Death of a close family member
6. Personal injury or illness
7. Marriage
8. Fired from work
9. Marital reconciliation
10. Retirement

Thoughts/Perceptions – Easier said than understood, stress is magnified by our thoughts and perceptions. The act of caring about a situation, emotional instability or weakened mental fortitude makes one vulnerable to expectation failure. When expectations are not met, it places undue hardship upon the psyche. Visualizing a traumatic event impairs our perception of how life should be, it consumes our thoughts, often replaying it over and over – etching it into our memory.

Situational – Life happens. Normality is the ups and downs of a day. How we relate to the ups and downs effect us emotionally, physically and mentally. Body chemistry changes to lesser or greater degrees based upon the situation and how we respond to it. Usually it goes unnoticed by most people.

Relationship – Many things in a relationship gives us eustress and distress. Stressors, such as fear of rejection, unresolved conflicts, differences in values (beliefs), miscommunication, disinterests, misperception to responsibilities and external

pressures not cooperatively dealt with causes distress and strain upon a relationship. Distress impacts the depth of care or love we have for another; yet, not possessing a relationship with another has a great impact a person. Everybody needs someone in his or her life.

Occupational – Today’s demand of our occupation places expectations (stress) upon the American worker. Each vocation has differing occupational stress. Stress experienced by emergency services personnel includes the ‘human element’. Stress is compounded by the human element, as in relationship stress. The trauma of a situation places an even greater degree of impact upon the occupational source of stress.

Types of Stress

Incident Specific and Critical Incident Stress

Sudden incident specific or critical stress occurs when it is experienced and causes an unusual or extreme emotional reaction afterwards. The exposure to an event is overwhelming to you and/or others. What is overwhelming to one person may not be overwhelming to another person. Sometimes this is subjectively based on each individual's life experience and belief systems.

Personal Crisis can cause the same stress response, i.e.: loss of a spouse, or arriving at a scene where you know the victim personally.

Not all stress that affects a person needs to be critical; some incident specific events are personal distressing situations and may resolve with time.



Delayed Stress

In some cases stress reactions to an overwhelming event do not occur until days, weeks, months or even years later. They can be as debilitating and impactful as a recent (critical) event. There seems to be a trigger that causes a delayed stress reaction. Although latent its effect places people into shock. Sometimes they refuse to acknowledge the impact of the previous event.

Cumulative Stress (Burnout)

Cumulative Stress occurs when a person's normal coping mechanism are continuously overwhelmed. Daily self-care activities are not enough and regenerative attitudes that reduce cumulative stress do not work with cumulative stress. Over time, cumulative stress reactions are very debilitating. People begin to normalize stress reactions, they begin to believe that frequent headaches, acid stomach, irritability, poor concentration, are normal and they just live with it. This produces further stress which can lead to serious physical and emotional illnesses.



Compassion Fatigue

The personal cost of the emergency services profession leads to emotional fatigue known as compassion fatigue. More than just the accumulation of critical incidents, it is the affect of becoming tired from emotionally investing themselves. Helping people can be draining, giving and giving without a sense of receiving. Personal issues, chronic worry and body tension contributes to a helper's Compassion Fatigue.

Compassion Fatigue & Secondary Trauma Stress Signs & Symptoms:

Sleep disturbance
Intrusive thought
Dissociation/withdrawal
Worry/Anxiety
Irritability/short temper



Secondary Traumatic Stress or Vicarious Traumatization

Anyone who engages empathically with trauma survivors is vulnerable to vicarious traumatization. If exposure disrupts your view of the world (life philosophy, ethical beliefs, how things should be in the world), your identity (your sense of who you are as a man/woman, mother/father, strong person, a helper), or spirituality (your sense of meaning, hope, belief and connection with something larger than yourself), you will be affected. Signs and symptoms can be the same as direct exposure to a traumatic event. These could include intrusive thoughts or images, sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, etc. *Secondary Traumatic Stress* Edited by B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D.



Stress Targeted Effects on Body Systems:

Cardiovascular and Cardiopulmonary System:

Chronic stress forces the heart to beat faster all of the time forcing it to wear out early in life. Arteries constrict which block blood flow to the heart. Blood becomes stickier which can lead to blood clotting and clogging of arteries. Stress increases blood-cholesterol levels. High blood pressure and hardening of the arteries and heart disease can be long term effects of chronic stress. People with Type A personalities have a higher incidence of heart attacks.

Stress, like a disease, can pervade our metabolism. Breathing and pulse changes to a point where it is unnoticed. Hypoventilation (Shallow breathing) leads to increased carbon dioxide and hypoxemia (low oxygenation). Conversely, hyperventilation (rapid breathing) stimulated by an anxiety response.

Immune System:

Chronic stress suppresses the immune system. The immune system fights off infections. When the body is in a sympathetic mode (fight or flight stress reaction) the immune response is redirected to the parts of the body that could potentially be injured and infections in the body become secondary to the immediate need. After awhile, if stress is chronic the immune cells lose their ability to recognize and attack infectious cells.

Nervous System:

Chronic stress interferes with nerve cells firing information which will eventually atrophy nerve cells affecting memory. Chronic stress can inhibit the production of serotonin which is responsible for having a sense of well being. Prolonged exposure can cause the hippocampus and/or amygdala to shrivel which can cause anxiety or depression.

Gastrointestinal System:

Acute stress causes the blood flow to the gut to be redirected to muscles for immediate response interfering with digestion. When stress becomes chronic digestion is inhibited chronically so nutrients cannot be absorbed. You lose the basic building blocks to keep your body healthy. The gut becomes leaky causing a number of symptoms, i.e. diarrhea, constipation, cramping, bloating, acid reflux, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease and predisposition to ulcers.

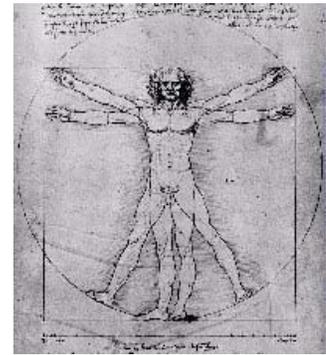
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www.reutershealth.com/wellconnected/doc31.html *Controlling Stress and Tension* by Girdano, Everly, Dusek

Physiology ~ Stress on the Body

“To understand the stress response, we must possess a fundamental knowledge not only psychology but of physiology as well”

George Everly, Ph.D.



Hans Selye, PhD, considered by many as the father of the study of stress, developed the idea that there is a direct relationship between chronic stress and excessive wear and tear throughout the body. It is believed that Americans suffer from chronic stress related diseases. Continuous exposure to stress can cause cellular and organ destruction.

Basics Well Understood

The Autonomic Nervous System regulates visceral (instinctive) activities and vital organs, including: circulation, digestion, respiration, and temperature regulation. This system is the automatic and unconscious system.

Although the autonomic nervous system is considered to be involuntary, this is not entirely true. A certain amount of conscious control can be exerted over it as has long been demonstrated by practitioners of Yoga and Zen Buddhism. During their periods of meditation, these people are clearly able to alter a number of autonomic functions including heart rate and the rate of oxygen consumption. These changes are not simply a reflection of decreased physical activity because they exceed the amount of change occurring during sleep or hypnosis.

Sympathetic Nervous System:

The limbic of the Central Nervous System regulates the fight-or-flight response. This physical arousal is stimulated through release of catecholamines such as epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine. [i.e. nitrous powered car engine]. These are neurotransmitters crucial to relaying information between nerve cells so you can respond. This system turns on whenever you perceive danger or traumatic events. Your perceptions of the event will determine if the fight-or-flight response is activated.

Parasympathetic Nervous System:

Maintains homeostasis through the release of acetylcholine, which is responsible for energy conservation relaxation. (i.e. a governor on the engine or overdrive in the transmission) Again, this is a neurotransmitter crucial to relaying information between nerve cells. The parasympathetic system is what soothes, calms and restores your mental, emotional and physical reactions.

Sympathetic Response (Catecholamines release)

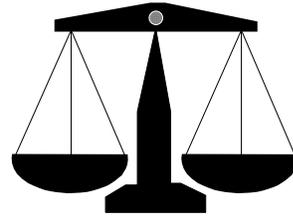
- Stimulates heartbeat
- Respiratory depth and rate increases
- Blood Pressure raises
- Muscles tenses
- Brain is awakened and becomes more simulated
- Pupils dilate (increases vision)
- Stimulates the liver glycogen into glucose
- Inhibits contraction of the bladder and rectum
- Shunts blood away from the skin and viscera to the skeletal muscles, brain, and heart

Parasympathetic Response

- Slows heart rate
- Controls breathing effort
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Muscles relax
- Increased blood flow to the skin and viscera
- Energy (nutrition) is stored
- Promotes growth and re-energizes cells
- Mediates and calms the psyche
- Constrict pupils

Endocrine System

The series of glands (i.e. thyroid, pancreas, adrenal glands, reproductive organs) located throughout the body regulate metabolic functions that require endurance rather than speed of operation. (i.e. low gear transmission). Stress impacts function of the endocrine system, i.e. stress reduces sex drive, appetite, fatigue.



Immune System

Unmanaged stress takes a toll on the immune system and accelerates the aging process. The body's immune (protection) system weakens from an increased heart rate, hypertension, blood glucose and cortisol levels, placed at risk by opportunistic diseases.

The Sympathetic Nervous System – A Deeper Understanding

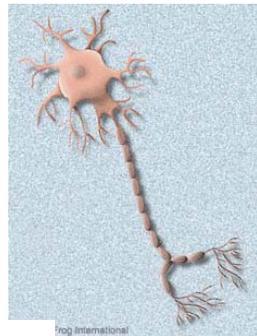


The Parasympathetic Nervous System

In short, the parasympathetic system returns the body functions to normal after they have been altered by sympathetic stimulation. In times of danger, the sympathetic system prepares the body for danger. The parasympathetic system reverses these changes when

the danger is over.

In short, the parasympathetic system returns the body functions to normal after they have been altered by sympathetic stimulation. In times of danger, the sympathetic system prepares the body for violent activity. The parasympathetic system reverses these changes when the danger is over.



Parasympathetic/Sympathetic Nervous System Interaction

The Parasympathetic Nervous System and Sympathetic Nervous System work together, when one is on, the other is off.

When the Parasympathetic System allows you to be rested and relaxed the body maintains homeostasis. In this state as your body's cells regenerate.

The Sympathetic is stimulated in times of danger, when you perceive danger or feel victimized, even when a person's PH is too acidic, allergic reactions to foods, and by actual trauma (injury). When the Sympathetic system is turned on you can spring into action. Once the stress or threat has subsided you want the Parasympathetic to turn back on and the Sympathetic to turn off. With chronic stimulation

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of the Sympathetic Nervous System through constant crisis or stress the body cannot rebalance itself and the Parasympathetic System stops working. The Sympathetic stays on all of the time causing a cascade of physical and emotional failure.

Domino Effect of Chronic Stress:

Parasympathetic system is turned off

Enzymes necessary for physiologic functioning are not produced

Blood goes to muscles so there is less blood, nutrients are not absorbed, acid builds

Large molecule (histamine) proteins enter the blood causing allergies (an immune response)

Large intestines don't function well; a waxy coating builds in large intestine, the wall of the gut becomes inflamed and leaky, and Candida and parasites live off of the waxy coating

This waxy coating keeps the body from effectively absorbing nutrients, raw materials are not there to create hormones.

Hormones are supported by soluble fat, poor or low fat diets deplete fat supplies

The Endocrine system begin to wear out from being stimulated all the time

The brain can't think – processing emotions, cognitive and somatic information at the same time is overwhelming to the brain

Metabolism slows down (weight gain) – cortisol is released, cholesterol is stored

Lack of adrenalin slows and makes it hard to deal with stress

Lack of cortisol and insulin makes causes hypoglycemic conditions

Lack of sex hormones (male and female) causes impotency and disinterest in sex

Brain chemistry (neurotransmitters) causes anxiety, anger or depression

The immune system which is stimulated continually, allows opportunistic diseases making it susceptible to infections, chronic fatigue and even organ failure

The body is caught in a cycle having no resources to draw upon to care for itself.

Positive Thoughts = Positive Benefits

LLLLL
LLLLLL
LLLLLL
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Building a Foundation

Developing Good Stress Management Skills



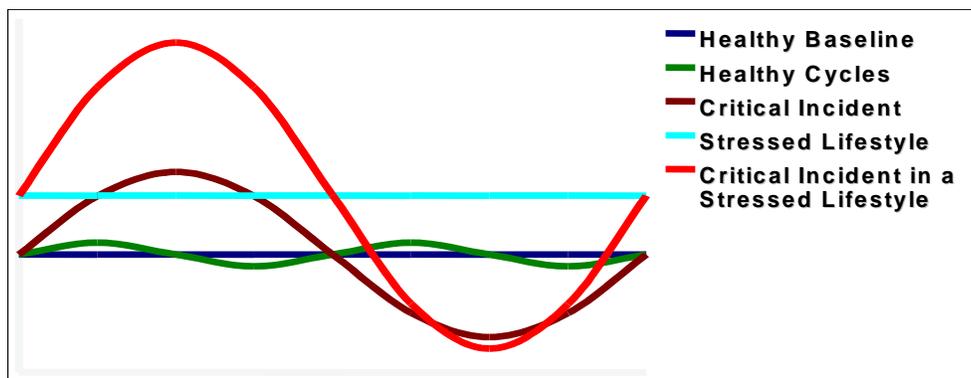
A foundation is to a house as is daily stress management habits to a healthy life.

Daily stress reduction skills will make it easier for your body, mind and emotions to return to normal and more quickly (turn the parasympathetic nervous system on). Daily stress reduction activities cement relaxation memory into your body.

A personal habit of stress reduction reminds the body to remain relaxed during stressful times. Without the experience of daily relaxation, the nervous system encounters more difficulty reaching a relaxed state. Persons with high stress lifestyles are unable to reach a completely relaxed state because they lack the experience of complete relaxation. When a critical incident occurs the nervous system crashes and eventually returns to a state of chronic stress rather than to a relaxed state.

As you see from the illustration, what goes up must come down. We have ebbs and flows in our energy and performance each day, the higher we peak the lower we fall. Having a balanced healthy low stress lifestyle keeps an even flow of ups and downs. Having a high stressed life style brings higher highs and lower lows. Then when a critical incident occurs the highs are even higher and the lows are even lower and harder to recover from. And, recovery is often incomplete because the body never reaches full relaxation because its lack of experience or habit.

“What goes up must come down; the higher we climb the further we fall.”





Balancing Life Activities

Managing stress directly relates to the balance and stability in your life.

“Life is full of experiences, not all of them are good.”

Ron Quinsey, Paramedic

King County CISM Manager



Diet ~ Fueling your body for Peak Performance

How does the food you eat affect you? Do some foods make you feel better than others?

What you put in your body is what you get out. It is often difficult to determine what a balanced diet is with all the conflicting and ever changing nutritional information.

What You Eat

What you eat affects your body chemistry. Some bodies are more acidic and require a more alkaline diet, some are more alkaline and require more acidic foods. Some bodies run a lot of heat so cooler foods (ie: cold drinks, salads) keep things in balance. Some bodies get cold easy so need warmer foods (i.e. warm or hot drinks, spicier foods). Some bodies do better with a little more protein (meats, poultry, fish) and some do better with a little more carbohydrates. Some bodies do better with meats, some do better with a vegetarian diet. Some people have food allergies and are unaware of it. Often they are mild and can show in digestive discomfort. Eating foods you are allergic to will deplete your energy and your ability to focus and concentrate; and turn on your sympathetic nervous system interfering with your digestion.

The blood flow moves away from the digestive system to the muscles when the sympathetic system is on. This prevents nutrients from being absorbed from the gut. The body does not have the nutrients it needs for energy to fuel the body so it will crave more food, particularly sugars and starches. This becomes a vicious cycle and leads to weight gain. This is why it is recommended that people eat in a relax low stress environment and allow at least ½ hour after a meal of relaxed time so the blood flow can get to the gut and absorb the nutrients from the food and distribute them through out the body systems. They are immune suppressed to the food chemistry, such as feeling flushed or hot after consuming wine or alcohol. The USDA’s Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) demonstrates balance nutrition and food groups.



www.mypyramid.gov

Fad diets, i.e. high protein diets, high carbohydrate diets, can disrupt your body and brain chemistry causing psychological symptoms, i.e. irritability, depression. Carbohydrates, fats and protein are all needed to maintain a healthy body and healthy mental functioning.

Sugar and caffeine make major changes in your blood sugar and brain chemistry. Chronic use of them can tax your physical system and cause emotional, psychological, and physical reactions, i.e. irritability, difficulty concentration, anxiety, tiredness. Use of these substances interferes with your body's attempt to balance your brain chemistry after exposure to stressful events and can prolong stress reactions and symptoms.

If you have chronic illness or physical complaints, if your sleep is disturbed, if your emotions are out of balance, one of the contributing sources could be your diet. For example, too much caffeine can interfere with sleep. This includes: falling asleep, tossing and turning, waking up during the night, or waking up tired even if you've had the usual number of hours of sleep. Caffeine can impact blood sugar the way sugar does by initially increasing insulin production and then exhaustion sets in as the blood sugar drops.

When You Eat

Develop an awareness of how often you need to eat (three meals a day or six smaller ones). Track your physical response, emotional response and clarity of thoughts when you are eating irregularly vs. regularly. Do you need to carry snacks in your pocket in case you are out on an extended call or a series of calls preventing you from eating meals? Develop an awareness of how your environment affects your body's needs, i.e. cold rainy climate vs. hot dry climates, and adjust your diet accordingly.

Physical Exercise

Exercise is critical for the development of certain neurotransmitters in the brain, called endorphins. Endorphins help us develop a sense of wellbeing. They make us feel good. This is why doctors prescribe exercise programs for people with depression. Over exercising can cause injury, which will prevent you from your exercise routine. Exercise affects your sleep. Without adequate exercise your sleep can become disrupted, i.e. you won't be able to sleep as deeply, you may wake during the night, you may have difficulty falling asleep and/or you may toss and turn during sleep.



It is important to develop a balanced exercise routine of weight lifting and aerobic activity and stretching. All contribute to emotional and psychological wellbeing. Weight lifting alone will not provide the stress release that aerobic activity does. Weight lifting can often mimic stress

responses since muscles, are tensed both in the lifting and in stressful events. The muscle cannot tell the difference between a stress response of a critical incident and that of weightlifting. If you have had a stressful event, aerobic activity afterwards will help release the stress response from the muscle. Make sure you work within your aerobic target zone. A heart rate higher than your target zone will exhaust you and if too low, you will not get the optimal fat burning. Stretching increases your flexibility and decreases the potential for injury.

Listening to your body and respecting its limits are critical. Each body is different and responds differently to different forms and amount of exercise. Some days will be different from others. If you are fighting off a cold or been under a lot of stress, you will need to honor your body's need to do less during that period of recovery. Pushing through these limits will prolong the illness or stress and can cause physical injury.

The use of chemicals to enhance performance can disrupt body and brain chemistry. Use of steroids produces psychological symptoms including: wide and erratic mood swings, increased aggressiveness ("steroid rage"), irritability. Physical risks or steroid use include: increased acne, liver dysfunction, tumors, hypertension, sexual impotency, and may increase cardiovascular risk.



Sleep

Sleep is only a Crutch! Right?

Sleep has a large impact on your overall wellbeing. It is one of the most important aspects of your life that will create stability.

Research shows that having a stable sleep schedule and adequate sleep every day is essential to psychological and physical health. Going to bed the same time each day and waking the same time each day, provides the stability you need. All people need 8 hours of sleep a night. Less than 8 hours disrupts crucial stages of sleep that affect your memory, and emotional and psychological health. Having enough sleep each day regulates brain chemistry resulting in healthy moods, good concentration and focus, and plenty of energy to get through the day.

Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep happens in shorter periods throughout you sleep. The last 1½ hours of an 8 hours sleep period is REM sleep. This cycle of sleep is crucial for memory formation and healthy psychological health. REM sleep deprived individuals become more irritable, have progressive memory impairment and eventually become psychotic.

Deep Delta sleep produces Human Growth Hormone (HGH) in the body which is what regenerates the body. When we are children we spend more time in Delta sleep because the HGH allows us to grow. As an adult it is a regenerative phase of sleep. The amount of delta sleep decreases as we age resulting in progressive aging. The more you disrupt your sleep the HGH you produce causing premature aging.

It takes an average of thirty (30) days for your body to readjust every time you change your sleep schedule or get less sleep than your body needs. The nature of emergency services places you at risk of sleep deprivation. 60 – 70% of shift workers have sleep disturbance (difficulty falling asleep, waking during the sleep period, early waking, sleep apnea). 10 – 20% of shift workers fall asleep at work. Catnaps are helpful when a full sleep is not possible if that are taken at the same time every day. Keeping a routine sleep schedule is critical. Sleeplessness has been known to contribute in making critical mistakes which can be disastrous in emergency service professions.

Erratic Sleep Symptoms:

Difficulty concentrating	Irritability	Memory loss
Depression	Chronic fatigue	Anxiety
Cognitive Disorganization (can't think clearly)		

Waking up with Light

Light has a major impact on your sleep. This is an issue in the Northwest because we can have long periods of time with cloud cover and very little sun exposure. The amount of light we are exposed to helps create melatonin in the brain. Melatonin is responsible for regulating you sleep/wake cycle. Waking to slowly to increasing light and being exposed to bright light in the morning helps to build the melatonin especially if you do shift work or live in an area that is frequently overcast, and during the winter when there is less light. Dawn simulators and light boxes are helpful in stabilizing sleep in people with disrupted sleep schedules. Dawn simulators are often used when people travel across time zones to adjust their sleep cycle.

Workers who are subjected to chronic changes in sleep schedule have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease, neurotic disorders, depression, and disruptions in appetite, diarrhea, and constipation.

www.clevelandclinic.org/health/health-info/docs/1400/1484.asp?index=6412

www.columbia.edu/~mt12/blt.htm

www.nimr.mrc.ac.uk/MillHillEssays/1997/sad.htm

Use Good Sleep Hygiene

- Have a bedtime routine
- Go to bed at the same time each day
- Remove TV & Radio from the bedroom
- Avoid a lot of physical activity before bed
- Eat a well balanced diet
- Avoid large amounts of caffeine and nicotine
- If you get chilled when you fall asleep eat or drink a small amount of something warm (a non stimulant)

Ideas to help with sleep deprivation from shift work

- Eat & sleep well before work.
- Use a digital 24 hour watch – prevents day/night disorientation
- Keep your sleep schedule the same on your days off. (It takes 30 days to readjust every time you change your sleep schedule.)
- Use bright sunlight or a dawn simulator to wake up with and use a light box or exposure to bright sunlight in the morning. (This signals your brain to make melatonin which regulates your day/night sleep cycle.)
- Use an answering machine to answer the phone when you are sleeping. Turn the ringer off.
- Educate family about keeping the noise down so you are not woken. Educate friends to not call or come over during your sleep periods.
- If you need a nap do so at a regularly scheduled time of the day.
- If you need to sleep in shifts, sleep 4 hours before you go to work and 4 hours after you get home from work.
- Work with others if at all possible to keep active and alert.
- Do something active on breaks.
- Do tedious work at the beginning of the shift, when you will have more energy, if at all possible.
- Take a short nap after work and before driving home to prevent accidents. Shift workers have higher incidents of car accidents on their way home from work. Take public transportation if possible.
- Get an annual physical exam particularly for detecting stress related and chronic sleep deprivation disorders, i.e. heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders, cancers, and other immune compromised disorders.

Job/Finances:

Money is a frequent stressor in life. People often define who they are by the job they have or the type of job they do.

Are you living within your means? Exposing yourself to chronic worry about money can be avoided if you stay within your means. Doing overtime once in a while is fine but depending on it to sustain your means will take from other areas of your life that keep things balanced. Sleep is often disrupted when working overtime which undermines your stability. Working too many hours a day will rob time to relax, sleep, exercise, fun, family, friends, increasing stress.



Are you defining yourself by your job or do you have other activities in your life that provide you support? A well-rounded life (balanced between friends, hobbies and job) will allow you to better manage times of change, i.e. when you become injured or when you retire. Having hobbies, friends, stability with family, spiritual activities, helps define who you are. Without some balance in your life the stress of change will be worse affecting your sense of self worth. Hobbies and other interests provide you with alternatives if you decide to change jobs or retire. Hobbies have often led to new career choices.



Family

Human beings are social by nature. Part of what keeps us healthy is our contact with others. Although we have contact with others in our jobs it is important to have deeper relationships and other interests outside of work. Time spent with family helps you regenerate.

Do you find it difficult to receive from others?

Time with spouses/partners and children is one of the most rewarding experiences in life. Time with extended family provides an even greater sense of support. The job of emergency services is one of giving to others – family and children is a part of life where they give to you. Often emergency services personnel have a difficult time receiving from others because they feel it is more natural to give than receive. You will be healthier if you can give and receive.

Resentment Reduction

Having good conflict resolution skills is critical in a family. Resentments can build and ongoing conflict serves only to tear down your natural desire to socialize. Ongoing chronic conflict increases stress which makes you more susceptible to critical incident stress reactions as mentioned in other sections of this text. Seek assistance from counseling to break the patterns of ongoing conflict(s) if it is a chronic source of stress.



Friends

Friendships are strong sources of support and stress reduction. Having time to play and interact with others is critical. Developing friendships through work can bring a sense of extended family as long as you and your friends are not focusing on work. Set boundaries with each other: “No shop talk” when away from work. Having friends outside of the job is very important. It gives you other perspectives of the world. It changes the focus away from work and gives you the chance to experience other things. Again, having friends with good conflict resolution skills is important so when disagreements occur they get resolved quickly rather than adding more stress to your life

Playing, laughing, time to share opinions and receive support all help bring a sense of wellbeing , stability emotionally and psychologically. This sense of wellbeing helps your physical body release tension and stress and develops better health.

Restorative Activities

Engaging in activities that bring you a sense of peace, calm and accomplishment decreases stress in your life. Take time every week (every day if possible) to do things that calm your nervous system. Fishing, gardening, spending time in the quiet of the outdoors have shown to successfully reduce stress. Those who do these kinds of activities tend to recover from stressful events much



quicker.

Doing things that expresses your creativity i.e. playing music, building things, painting or drawing brings a sense of accomplishment and can calm your nervous system.

Listening to soothing music and meditating are other restorative activities. Anything that quiets the chatter in your mind and brings you a sense of calm is important. People who meditate have been shown to handle stress in their lives more effectively and have less physical ailments. It is important you find activities (more than one) that you enjoy. If you don't already have something that restores balance in your life begin exploring different options until you find what you enjoy.



Spirituality & Belief Systems

Spirituality, a sense of 'belief' can be the foundation to self worth and purpose. Whether you have a spiritual practice, religious beliefs or just live by a sense of ethics and values, it is important to have an internal moral compass and a way to assess where you are with your direction (purpose).

Are you in alignment with your own ethical beliefs?

Time for self-reflection and self-encouragement gives you a chance to reduce nagging stress of being upset with yourself over mistakes you may have made. Take the time to learn from the mistakes to make changes for the future. Journaling has been found to be very effective in reducing stress. Writing is a dramatic way of stress reduction; it is a cathartic means of ridding your mind of problems. If you are a religious person or spiritual, take time to practice your beliefs, including self-reflection. Prayer is one such power method. If you are a spiritual person, take time for your spiritual practices. Turning to a force, power or being greater than yourself can bring great comfort.

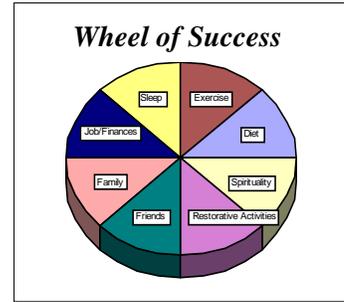
If you are a non-religious or non-spiritual person take time to evaluate what you feel, become introspective. If you have made mistakes, learn from them and self correct for the future. Again, journaling or act can be a good way to explore this.

Finding time for yourself to review where you are with your ethical, moral, spiritual or religious beliefs is a proactive way of heading off stress and can reduce your vulnerability to stress reactions in a critical incident. Some Emergency Services Professionals say their strong belief systems allow them to better handle critical incidents.

Self Care To Decrease Stressful Activities

Allow balance in some areas of your life to right an unbalanced area.

These eight sections of the *Wheel of Success* are critical to your health and wellbeing. Possessing balance in your life, as much as possible, will allow you to handle stress better and maintain emotional, psychological, mental and physical wellbeing.



‘Life happens!’ There will always be an occasion where an area of your life goes out of balance, i.e. an unexpected financial burden, domestic or job troubles. If the areas of your life are in balance you will experience more stability and better able to handle the crisis. A balanced lifestyle allows you to better handle life’s ups and downs. When there is conflict in families having friends and work provides a chance for support, changing the focus for a while and allow regeneration time.

Evaluate your life to the eight areas in the Wheel of Success, see which areas are balanced and which areas need attention. Develop a plan and gradually work at creating balance in each area. As you bring these areas into balance you will find you will recover from stress situations quicker and easier. When you enjoy a balanced life or have identified area(s) of improvement, you will better handle critical incident. If you do not have a balanced life, and a critical incident occurs, emotional and physical reactions to the event can become more intense and last longer.

Stress First Aid

- **Inhale for 4 seconds**
- **Hold it for 4 seconds**
- **Exhale for 4 seconds**
- **Hold it for 4 seconds.**

What Symptoms Do You Get When You Are Stressed?

What Do You Do To Reduce The Affects Of:

Acute Stress?

Chronic Stress?

GRIEF

Often Emergency Service Personnel experience loss that is not associated with a critical incident. Loss of a co-worker by natural causes or accidents off the job, line of duty death, loss of a family member, or a relationship in their personal life all cause grief reactions. Although grief has similar emotional, physical, mental and psychological reactions as critical incident stress, it impacts people for a longer time. There are phases all people go through when they are faced with grief.



- Shock or Disbelief – Feelings of shock, numbness, feeling alienated from others often occur. People may try to rationalize or intellectualize during this time to manage the feeling of being out of control. People often withdraw from their social support systems and may feel disoriented. This experience can last up to 6 weeks and people can move in and out of this phase.
- Anger – Anger will come and go throughout the grieving process. Questions like “Why me?” “Why my child, friend, co-worker?” Blaming others, i.e. the doctors, nurses, other family, friends, or co-workers may occur. You may be angry at the world, or God or at yourself. This is a normal phase. Don’t judge yourself or others for this phase, just let it happen and you’ll move on. Often our view of the world is changed forever with loss, causing us to feel out of control. Anger can help us feel more in control and allows us to feel more energetic and empowered. Eventually it will stop if you allow yourself to grieve.
- Bargaining – Sometimes people make bargains with God to ask for the loss to be reversed.
- Depression – Sadness, sorrow, numbness, lack of energy can set in. You may find yourself sobbing uncontrollably one minute and able to do things the next. This is normal. Crying and acknowledging sadness is an important step to recovery. Suppressing or denying your grief will only prolong the suffering. This experience does not feel good but is important. Acknowledge the truth, you are sad about the loss.
- Acceptance – Once you have allowed yourself to work through all of the feelings that come and go throughout the process you can reach acceptance. Accepting the changes that have occurred in your life because of the loss. Adjusting to the new changes that have occurred because of the loss. It can take 1 or 2 or more years to reach acceptance. It depends on you and how you allow yourself to be in the other phases, what kinds of social support you have and allow yourself to receive from, what changes you allow yourself to make and what changes you make in how you perceive the world.

Avoiding the emotions you experience only strengthens the pain. Sometimes you just have to put one foot in front of another to get through the process.

“Unattended sorrow gradually displaces the joy of youth and adds to the diminishment of trust and hope.” Stephen Levine Unattended Sorrow

Grief can bring many of the same physical, emotional, mental and spiritual reactions as critical incidents, i.e.: sadness, anger, difficulty concentrating, irritability with others, lack of energy, upset stomach, headaches, questions about faith.



Recommendations for Self Care After a Critical Incident or Loss

Some of the things recommended for recovery from a critical incident apply to recovering from grief.

Do and Don'ts

- Do keep to your routine as much as possible.
- Do eat a healthy diet.
- Do continue your exercise program.
- Don't use drugs or alcohol to numb the pain.
- Do get plenty of sleep.
- Don't avoid emotions.
- Don't become overactive and exhaust yourself.
- Don't get too lonely.
- Take all the time you need to work through your feelings.
- Don't let others rush you into "getting over" your feelings.
- Don't make major decisions about change. It is usually suggested you wait at least a year to make any major changes in your life.
- Don't be around judgmental people.
- Do coach yourself that there will be good and bad days.
- Do accept support from others.
- Do cry.
- Don't hold back crying for the sake of others.
- Do remember the person you lost as often as you need to.
- Do talk to others who have experienced the loss.
- Do share stories about the person you lost with others.
- Do ask for what you need from others.
- Don't try to do everything yourself.
- Do accept offers to help.

Be aware that anniversaries of a loss can bring up strong emotions again. Taking time to check in and acknowledge the reactions will help them pass more quickly.

Grief counseling is available from community resources, churches and licensed therapists. Grief support groups are available both for in person support and online.

<http://www.memorialhospital.org/Library/general/stress-THE-3.html>

Memorial Hospital, Tawanda, PA

<http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/loss/griefcontinuum.html>

[Phil Rich, EdD, MSW, DCSW](#)

<http://www.emedicinehealth.com/articles/11437-4.asp>

E Medicine Consumer Health

http://fl.essortment.com/stagesgrief_rbdm.htm

Gerry Trickle – 2002 Pagewise

Developing Resilience

Make connections: Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important, especially after stressful events. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen strengthens your resilience. Being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations or other local grouped provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems: You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to them. Try looking beyond the present in order to consider how future circumstances may be better. Note any subtle ways in which one might feel somewhat better as one deals with difficult situations.

Accept that change is part of living: Certain goals may no longer be reachable as a result of adverse situations but there are new goals to set. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help one focus on new possibilities.

Movement toward goals: Develop realistic goals, and do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that helps you move toward your goals. Focusing on unachievable goals only adds to the stress. Asking oneself, “What is one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

Taking decisive actions: Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Avoiding them will only make things worse. Taking actions that you can empowers you.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery: People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some way from their struggle with loss or difficulty. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of personal strength, even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for their life.

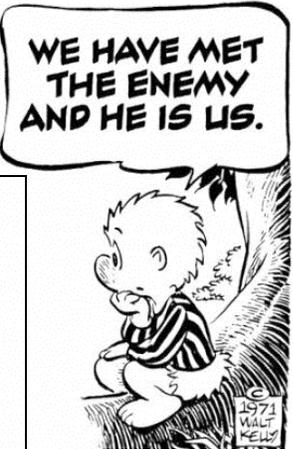
Nurturing a positive view of one's self: Develop confidence in your ability to solve problems and trust your instincts. This helps build resilience.

Keep things in perspective: Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a larger context. Maintain a long term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

LOOK FOR THE GIFTS: In every tragedy there are gifts that come out of it. Often people are so focused on what has gone wrong that they do not see what is right in front of them. The community you serve may come forward in a number of ways to show their support and appreciation. Friends, family, neighbors, strangers, co-workers may offer support and/or appreciation. You may need to tell them what kind of support is helpful to you. Receiving is **crucial** to resilience. Having a balance of giving and receiving will help you stay healthy and strong.

Personality of the Emergency Services Worker

The Emergency Service Worker has traits that both make them good at their jobs and that can lead to more stress reactions.



- *Tend to be obsessive/compulsive, wanting things to be just right.*
- *Have a high need for control and for stimulation.*
- *Often have difficulty in saying no and are action oriented.*
- *Become easily bored and are risk takers.*
- *Have a strong need to be needed and have a rescue personality.*
- *Are driven by internal motivations and are family oriented.*
- *Generally have a high tolerance for stress and ambiguity.*



These traits can also drive them to forget about self-care and prevent them from using good stress reduction techniques. Some of critical stress effects are worsened because the body is already under stress.

The Emergency Services Profession

Individuals who seek a career in the emergency services profession, be they 9-1-1 dispatcher, firefighter, police officer, EMT or paramedic, nurse, doctor and a long list of affiliated professionals, such as corrections officer, search and rescuer or medical examiner, etc., enter the career with the desire to help people. These dedicated people know that their decision comes with sights, sounds and smells that other jobs do not encounter. These experiences are sometimes so gruesome and disturbing that they are forever etched into their memories. Some, not all, of these sensory experiences do not illicit what is termed “critical incident stress”, though most are lifelong memories. Working conditions can contribute to or reduce job stress:

Police Officers

Often they work solo (alone) with nobody to readily discuss what they have encountered. Law enforcement is a job with threat of violence and chronic exposure to very negative people.

Firefighters/EMS

The job allows them to work in minimums of two and sometimes more which, without realizing it, support each other informally.

9-1-1 Dispatchers

They work in an environment where they must imagine (visualize) the event to better understand the context of the emergency. They are often caught between the needs and demands of the public and the essential support of the emergency service personnel on the street.

Healthcare Workers Emergency department personnel work daily under conditions of human injury and disease. Like other jobs listed above they make decisions that are a matter of life or death.

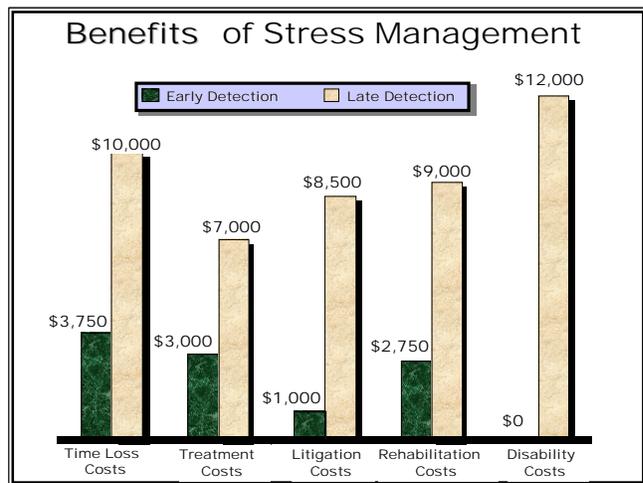
The Value of Pre-Employment Psychological Tests

First, is this the right profession for the individual? Do they possess the right attribute for the emergency services profession? Pre-employment psychological screening is invaluable for the individual and employer. Employment psychologist should test for individuals who have a propensity for stress and trauma. They should look for individuals who utilize good coping mechanisms and who seek healthy, positive, balanced lifestyles.

Human Resources Support in Emergency Services Personnel

The greatest asset in any agency is their people. An investment in human resources not only makes financial sense; it increases productivity, improves morale and job satisfaction and is morally right: help the helper help. Emergency service agencies utilize many different personnel support mechanisms.

- Policies/Procedures supporting stress management and psychological trauma; includes Line of Duty Death procedure
- Employer support for stress management efforts
- Annual Stress Management/CISM Education
- Psychological/Mental Health Insurance
- Chaplaincy/Crisis Intervention
- Employee Assistance Program
- Peer Support Team
- Family Support Program
- Post Crisis Interventions (Defusings; Demobilizations; CISD, 1:1s)
- Health & Wellness Initiative (medical physicals, health clubs/exercise time)



A study of 200 clinical cases by Barrington Psychiatric Center, as reported in the EAP Digest, September / October

Basic Stress Management Rules

You have a choice to take care of yourself (eat healthy, get enough sleep, exercise, do self soothing restorative activities) that will stop stress reactions or you can choose to break your body’s systems down and suffer physically, emotionally and in your relationships.

Pack your personal parachutes:

Remember: “You didn’t create the emergency, you can only try to make it better.”
“Do at least one thing nice for yourself everyday; and, something nice for somebody else”
“You have every reason to feel bad after bad events; it’s normal.”

What is a Critical Incident?

“Any incident faced by emergency services personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later. All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of type, generates unusually strong feelings in the emergency workers.”

*Jeffrey Mitchell, Ph.D.
(former firefighter/paramedic and developer of the CISM model)*

Emergency service personnel are exposed to a wide variety of critical events throughout their careers. Most adapt or become desensitized to the kind of calls they respond. Some don't, the stress builds and then they leave the profession or channel the effect in an unhealthy manner.

Daily Stress Management Helps In Acute Stress

As you progress in your career it is imperative that you develop mechanisms that reduce the daily stress and ways to get assistance when your normal mechanisms don't work. When your normal mechanisms don't work is an indication you have experienced a critical incident.

It costs an Agency more money to train new workers than to provide crisis intervention services to their workers. Keeping experienced workers in your agency is critical to your ability to deliver services. Rapid turn over in an Agency decreases the ability to develop strong teamwork and increases stress for all workers. This provides added stress for managers as well, having to worry about decreasing morale and constantly training new personnel.

What is a critical incident to one person is not to another. Some will respond more to a death of a child especially if they have children, while others will respond to specific sights or smells they experienced at the scene. It is important that you do not compare your responses to others. Your response is your response!

Events That Often Become Critical Incidents

Look for the appearance of strong feelings among workers involved in the event. These can be emotional, physical, or cognitive reactions.

Factors which make a situation more likely to reach critical incident status:

- Human-caused events elicit stronger feelings and reactions than natural disasters or freak occurrences.
- Events with unusual sights, sounds, or smells.
- Large number of victims.



- Night events increase perceptual distortions.
- Events which are life-threatening to the worker.
- Workers in physical jeopardy.
- Worker perceived him/herself to be in physical jeopardy.
- Equipment failures.
- b. Breakdown in incident operations.
- Toxic exposures or health risks.
- Worker's sense of professional competence is attacked.
- Events which violate the worker's sense of how the world is or should be.
- Death of children, teens, young parents.
- Freak natural occurrences involving common objects.
- Holiday disasters.
- Events drawing high media coverage.
- Interference in performing job functions.
- Working under the pressure of being observed.
- Events that have elements that the worker identifies with.
- Death of a co-worker or another rescue worker, especially line-of-duty death.
- Knowing any victims in an incident.
- Being familiar with the scene of an event.
- Elements parallel issues in worker's own life.

What Reactions Might Expect During & After Exposure to A Critical Incident

You may or may not have reactions to an event. Sometimes reactions occur right after an event and sometimes they occur days, weeks, months and sometimes years after the event. Each person is different. Don't compare your reactions to others. These reactions are part of the Common stress response.

These Are Common Responses To Abnormal Events

During the Incident Symptoms

numbness, confusion, non-directed activity, disorientation, tunnel vision, crying, muscle tension (clenching teeth, etc.), profuse sweating, chest pain and/or increased heart beat.

Post Incident Symptoms

Post incident stress symptoms may occur within hours after the incident and may include: blurred vision, numbness, loss of memory, confusion, non-directed activity, disorientation and restlessness.

Delayed Stress Symptoms

Delayed post incident stress symptoms may occur weeks or months after the incident and may include restlessness, irritability, chronic fatigue,

sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, moodiness, muscle tremors, difficulties concentrating, increased substance abuse, nightmares, headaches, vomiting, diarrhea and/or suspiciousness.

Other Signs/Symptoms of Critical Incident Stress

PHYSICAL

appetite changes
headaches*
tension
fatigue
weight change
increasing colds*
muscle aches*
rash*
foot/finger tapping
increased alcohol use
increased drug use
increased tobacco use

INTELLECTUAL

forgetfulness
dull senses
poor concentration
stuttering
low productivity
negative attitude
confusion
lethargy
loss of creativity
boredom
continuous daydreams

EMOTIONAL

anxiety
frustration
short temper
apathy
mood swings
nightmares
crying spells
irritability
depression
easily discouraged
easily startled

RELATIONAL

feeling isolated
intolerant of others
resentful
loneliness
lashing out at others
marriage problems
social withdrawal
lowered sex drive
nagging
anti-social behavior
lack of intimacy

SPIRITUAL

feeling of emptiness
doubt in religious or spiritual beliefs
feeling unforgiven
spiritually lonely
looking for magical solutions
loss of purpose of life
needing to prove self worth
cynicism about life

Remember that you may or may not have these reactions after an event. This list is just to give you a place to check out your reactions. If you are having these reactions it is important you get support through one of the crisis intervention services and within your agency. If you do not get support the symptoms can progress and cause you problems at work, at home, with friends, and to your physical and emotional well being.

Helping Yourself Through Times of Stress - Stress Management Techniques

Individuals can respond very differently to the same stressor; any given situation can cause eustress in one person and distress in another. This happens because of differences in physiology and life circumstances, as well as different methods of stress management. Methods of coping that work well in childhood situations often become ingrained and

habitual, and often follow the child into adulthood. In the adult world, these skills can be quite inappropriate, and stress heightens as the person clings to obsolete behaviors. However, new skills can be learned, and poor coping methods replaced. There are currently many classes, books, and seminars available to help people develop better habits of managing stress.

Other approaches to dealing with stress include The Alexander Technique, Shiatsu, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, yoga and meditation. For example, when Selye reviewed the physiological changes measured in practitioners of transcendental meditation (TM), he concluded that such changes were the opposite of the body's reaction to stress. The therapeutic effect of TM was most distinct in people whose coping skills were poorly adapted to the stress of daily life.

-- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stress_\(medicine\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stress_(medicine))

What Crisis Intervention and Stress Management Services Are Available In King County?

The King County Critical Incident Stress Management Team can provide an array of services. It is made up of Peer Team members from a variety of Emergency Service disciplines, i.e.: Police Officers, Firefighters, Paramedics, Dispatchers, Mental Health Professionals.



Helping the Helper Help

Pre-Incident Education

Pre-incident education provides information on crisis intervention and stress management services to front line workers, supervisors and administrators. Information on what critical incident stress is, physical, emotional, cognitive, relational and spiritual reactions that occur with critical incident stress, and stress management tools are covered. Pre-incident education can prepare the emergency service worker to recognize stress reactions and how to take care of themselves. The need for defusings and debriefings often decreases as workers become more familiar with critical incident stress reactions and how to take care of themselves after an event. Information is presented on what CISM services are available and how to access those services.

Peer Support

Developing a Peer Support Team within your agency provides your workers with a Team of specially trained employees that can assist their co-workers in coping with personal or job related problems. Peer support is preventative and encourages emergency workers to seek assistance in the early stages of a problem. Peer support teams provide a place for co-workers to talk about issues and to get referrals for a variety of issues. Employees are more likely to seek out peers before searching for professional assistance that may be needed. Peer support team members are often able to facilitate links to important services.

Peer Team members are trained in peer support, crisis intervention, stress management, and how to make referrals. They may also be trained in critical incident stress debriefings, defusings, demobilizations and family support. They have an organized approach to cope with stress in the workplace that they can share with peers. Peer Support Team members provide one-on-one support after a critical incident, particularly if the event did not effect a larger group of peers.



To set up a Peer Support Team you can call the King County CISM Team, or visit their website and request **A Guide to Developing a Peer Support Program.**

King County CISM Team believes the Emergency Services Professional's Family is the primary source of support on and off the job. Educational and post critical incident stress services are available upon request.

Family Support

Family Support is another facet you can develop in your agency.



Often the Peer Support Team is instrumental in developing a Family Support Program. Family Support would provide pre-incident education to family members along with how to recognize critical incident stress reactions in the emergency service worker, stress management tools and help for families to form their own support system among families of emergency service workers. Debriefings for families can be provided as needed. Line of duty death, officer involved shootings, or serious injury events are times family members will need crisis intervention and support as well.

Family support services can be requested from the King County CISM Team. The Team can also assist your agency in developing a Family Support Program.

One on Ones (1:1s)

One on one's can be requested from the CISM Team. If an emergency service worker has been exposed to a critical incident them self and needs an individual debriefing a peer team member can provide a 1:1 debriefing. Emergency service workers can request peer team member call them for other kinds of support as well, i.e.: support with everyday work stresses, request for referrals.

Defusings

A Defusing is a short (half to one hour) intervention conducted within 8 hours after the incident, often at the station. Usually, only those personnel most directly affected are involved. Defusings must be conducted by trained CISM team members, however, may be conducted by Peer Debriefers without the assistance of a Mental Health Professional (MHP).

A defusing may provide: an update and status report on the incident; encourages a brief discussion of the events to reduce acute stress. A well run defusing may eliminate the need for a full formal debriefing

Demobilizations

A Demobilization is used only after large scale incidents and lasts no longer than 30 minutes. Emergency personnel are sent to a large meeting facility to rest, have something to eat and meet with CISM team members, prior to returning to duty or to home. Personnel are not requested to discuss the incident. CISM team members will briefly (10-15 minutes) provide information on typical effects of Critical Incident Stress provide practical suggestions for stress management in the hours and days following the incident answer questions. A demobilization replaces a defusing, you do not do both.

Crisis Management Briefing

Large and protracted events or situations where emergency service incidents do not fit normal definition may be better served with amended CISM services.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

Incident Stress Debriefing offers people who have been involved in a critical incident the chance to come together as a group and to have some time to identify their own personal reactions to the event.

A (CISD) debriefing is:

- A group process

- A group discussion
- An opportunity to describe their reactions
- An opportunity to hear others reactions
- An educational process

*Confidentiality is paramount.
What is said in a CISD is kept in a CISD.*

Benefits of CISD

- Being involved in a critical incident can make a person feel isolated. Traumatic events often trigger responses in people that are unfamiliar and sometimes frightening. Hearing other workers share about their reactions can reduce self inflicted stigma.
- Debriefings offer information about typical human responses to the abnormal events and help workers understand what they are experiencing.
- Debriefings accelerate the normal recovery of normal people with typical reactions to abnormal events.
- Debriefings also help people develop strategies for coping with their reactions to the event.
- There is evidence that having strong social supports after a traumatic event helps people reestablish a sense of psychological well-being and regain equilibrium
- Many emergency service workers say that it is difficult to share these events with friends and family who weren't there or couldn't understand. They don't want to expose them to the details of these situations.
- Providing group interaction of workers involved in critical incidents offers an important way to ensure social support. This social support is necessary in recovering from psychological trauma.
- Emergency Service Workers are encouraged to use the healthy coping mechanisms they already have in life, to rely on the supports they have outside the job, and to seek professional assistance if these systems are not enough.

Who makes up a Debriefing Team?

- Mental Health Professional trained to understand emergency services
- Emergency Services Peers trained to understand stress reactions

The King County CISM team members completed a selection process that includes application and an oral interview process. Every member has completed Basic CISM and numerous other related courses.

What Happens at a Debriefing? How long do they last?

CISD last, on average two to three hours. The length of the debriefing depends on the size of the group, the nature of the incident and the depth of

emotion from the incident.

Am I required to attend?

Nobody is forced to attend. Some agencies require mandatory attendance, as would be in any post incident review. There is immense value in convening all the individuals from the event.

Though you are not required to speak in a CISD, often you will hold an important point, perspective or piece of information about the event that is helpful to other workers that they would not get if you were not there. Simply being there supports the emergency services team. Debriefings are helpful in reestablishing the effective functioning of workgroups.

It is the nature of the human response to events of this magnitude to experience some shock and denial. People often don't realize immediately that they are having reactions. Certain events simply will precipitate reactions in almost everyone, what these reactions are will vary among people, but everyone will have some reaction.

Fellow emergency service responders often miss responders who do not attend the CISD.

What about confidentiality?

Confidentially allow individuals to speak in a safe environment. Discussions often include perceptions, emotions and reactions. What is said in a debriefing stays in a debriefing – keeping

There is no rank in a debriefing.

There is no media coverage in a debriefing and no notes or records are taken during the debriefing. Participants may share their own experiences of the incident and their own reactions to the debriefing process with people who did not participate in the debriefing, but they may not talk about anyone else's experience or comments during the debriefing.

The Fact Phase may be skipped if a pending investigation jeopardizes confidentiality; i.e.: In an officer involved shooting an officer may not wish to attend a CISD if his/her speaking in the Fact Phase could affect them legally.

What if I am uncomfortable talking about my experiences during a debriefing?

Most people find that they will want to contribute some information about their critical incident experience during a debriefing. Participants are invited to share their experiences to the extent that you feel comfortable doing so. No one is "forced" to talk if they choose not to.

What Happens After a Debriefing?

After the debriefing, you will receive an Evaluation Questionnaire from the CISM Team Leader. We would appreciate you taking the time to fill these out and return them to us. We are trying to provide the most effective

services to people who need us.

Personal Referrals

If people find they are continuing to have symptoms that are distressing to them after a critical incident, they may ask the Mental Health Professional on their debriefing team to provide them with treatment resources in their local community. Referrals may be made to Private Therapist or Employee Assistance Programs

Family Debriefings

Some Critical Incidents can affect family members of emergency service personnel as well, i.e.: Line of Duty Death, severe injury of an emergency service worker. A family debriefing can be requested. This request can be made by Peer or Family Support Team members or by Command. The same seven step debriefing model is used for a Family Debriefing as for Emergency Service Personnel.

Who Provides Crisis Intervention Stress Management Services?

The King County Emergency Medical Services Division coordinates the CISM Program for Emergency Service Workers in King County. The CISM Program provides all of the above services free of charge for requesting agencies in King County.

Who is Responsible for Requesting CISM Services?

Emergency Service Personnel, Command Officers and Medical Control Authorities are responsible for identifying and recognizing significant incidents that may require CISM services. Debriefings have been found to be most effective if they occur after 24 hours and within 72 hours of a critical incident, it is important to request a debriefing as soon as possible after the event.

How Do I Request CISM Services

The King County CISM Team is activated by calling Valley Communications Center: 253-372-1400 (24 Hours a day)

The dispatcher will contact the on-duty CISM Team Coordinator who will immediately contact the requesting agency, evaluate the needs of the agency and set up a time for the most appropriate services. The Team Coordinator will assist you in determining which services are needed and help you with the details of setting up services.

To request Pre-Incident Education Training for your agency, contact the King County EMS Training Section at 206-296-4893.

Study Questions

1. What are some diseases that have been associated with stress?
2. What are four of the eight elements in a balanced lifestyle?
3. What are the three types of stress?
4. Name four factors that make a situation more likely to reach Critical Incident status?
5. What are the three stages in which Emergency Service Workers may develop Critical Incident Stress symptoms?
6. What are three symptoms and three signs of stress upon a person?
7. What are three things that contribute to resilience?
8. What is a Peer Support Team?
9. What is a One on One?
10. What are the CISM Resources available to your agency?
11. The purpose of a CIS Debriefing includes what four items?