

▣ Survival in the Fire service

Creating the “Culture” For Behavioral Health – Notes

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Factors that Influence the Stress Response:

Genetic Influences

- Family history of psychological conditions
- Temperament

Past Experiences

- Learned coping patterns
- Previous exposure to stress

Existing Conditions

- Closeness of the situation to your own life
- The event
- Health status
- Resources and support systems
- Individual appraisal of event and resources

Stress Sources

Environmental

- Politics
- Over activity/Under activity
- Poor relationships with co-workers/ supervisors
- Frequent changes in shift

Response

- Line of duty death
- Traumatic injury
- Injury/death to children
- Emotionally upsetting scenes
- Threat of personal injury/death

Change!

- ▣ *People will resist change they didn't help create!....*

National Trends (1990's)

One-fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives

Northwestern National Life

Three-fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago

Princeton Survey Research Associates

Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor

St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.

National Trends (2000's)

80% of workers feel stress on the job.

14% felt like striking a co-worker in the past years – but didn't.

25% have felt like screaming because of job stress.

9% are aware of an assault or violent act in their workplace, 18% had experienced some sort of threat in past year.

Gallop Poll sponsored by the Marlin company

62% routinely have work-related neck pain, 44% stressed-out eyes, 38% hurting hands, 34% difficulty sleeping.

2000 Integra Survey

Change results from:

Economic conditions/competition causing reductions in workforce.

Fewer people are having to do what previously was accomplished by larger staffs.

Employees are having to comply with increased demands in terms of both quantity and quality.

The trend today is to hire fewer than adequate staff and work it to the max.

Who Wants to Work in a "High Stress" Job?

First Born or Only Child, Were active in HS sports, Received passing but not spectacular grades, Joined the military or got a job after HS, Married in their 20's
Had kids in their 20's, Were the "Go to" person in their family

Typically

A Responsibility Absorber

Action oriented

Excessively self-critical

Easily bored

Risk taker

Highly dedicated

The Rescuer (family & work)

Need to be in control

Need to do a perfect or near perfect job

Have an inability (or almost) to say NO

Have difficulty accepting praise
Use external resources to cope (alcohol etc)
Have an internally motivating personality

Responder Culture

What you believe about yourselves and why you believe it.

Action Oriented in the service of responding to emergencies, Problem Solvers, Are able to control your environment and yourselves, People are better off because you are there, "Command Presence" Able to maintain clarity and effectiveness under stress, Effectively control people in crisis, Expectation of an ability to effect positive outcomes regardless of the circumstances, Unaffected by gruesome events

Why do you Believe These Things?

Because without these beliefs you could not do your jobs

- ▣ Chronic Stress' Toll on the Body
- ▣ Chronic Stress Damages the:
 - Immune System
 - Cardio-Respiratory System
 - Neurological System
- ▣ Chronic Stress...
 - Re-deposits fat at the waist
 - Accelerates aging
- ▣ In addition to the daily wear and tear of your job, events that happen that you couldn't of predicted when you went to work have the potential to create significant human distress and overwhelm your usual coping mechanisms.
- ▣ Overwhelming events can lead to a CRISIS response...
 - Psychological homeostasis is disrupted
 - Your usual coping mechanism have failed to reestablish this balance
 - Distress engendered by the event has yielded some evidence of functional impairment
- ▣ Stressful Events
- ▣ Overwhelming Incidents:
 - Far beyond normal human daily experiences
 - Happen suddenly without warning
- ▣ Exposed Responders
 - 74% recover w/o assistance

- 22% show illness symptoms w/in 6-12 months
 - 4% develop PTSD
- ☐ *Just because an incident is not bothering you, doesn't mean someone else on the crew is not impacted!*
- ☐ Acute Symptoms - Physical
 - “Normal and predictable”
 - ☐ Nausea, diarrhea
 - ☐ Profuse sweating and tremors
 - ☐ Increase heart rate
 - ☐ Hyperventilation
 - ☐ Headache
 - ☐ Chest pain
 - ☐ Difficulty sleeping
 - ☐ Cold hands and feet
- ☐ Acute Symptoms - Cognitive
 - “Normal and predictable”
 - ☐ Impaired thinking
 - ☐ Difficulty concentrating
 - ☐ Confusion/disorientation
 - ☐ Forgetting to remember things
 - ☐ Short and variable attention span
 - ☐ Flashbacks and vivid recall
- ☐ Acute Symptoms - Emotional
 - “Normal and predictable”
 - ☐ Anxiety
 - ☐ Fear
 - ☐ Guilt
 - ☐ Depression
 - ☐ Anger
 - ☐ Resentment
 - ☐ Feeling alone, abandoned
 - ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Delayed Stress Responses
 - ☐ Occur hours, weeks, months or years later...Most likely
 - Fatigue
 - Depression
 - Irritability
 - Sleep disturbances
- ☐ Delayed Stress Response
- ☐ Also common...

- Non-specific anxiety
 - Change in eating habits
 - Loss of emotional control
 - Loss of sex drive
 - Increase arguments - mate, family, co-workers
 - Behaving "out of character"
 - Change in menstrual cycle
 - Drop in work performance
- ☐ Responders Set Themselves Up
 - ☐ Cognitive Dissonance
 - ☐ When...
 - Culture, Facts and Expectations collide
 - If you blame yourself,...that is something you have control over...
- ☐ Our Strengths can be our greatest weaknesses...
- ☐ So...What can we do about it?
- ☐ Before the Incident (Preventative Steps)
- ☐ Education and Training
 - Both stress management and job related
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Understand that "things change"
- ☐ Eat a Proper Diet
- ☐ Get Good Sleep
- ☐ Make Time For Yourself and Those You Love
 - Laugh, Have Fun!
- ☐ After the Incident
- ☐ Talk
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Eat a Proper Diet
- ☐ Avoid the use of Alcohol/Drugs as way to cope
- ☐ Stress Management Resources?
- ☐ Seek Professional Mental Health Intervention if needed
- ☐ Case Studies
 - (5 Assignment Model)
 - Talk
 - Eat
 - Exercise
 - Schedule something to do when you get home (that you enjoy and can look forward to!)

- Laugh
- ▣ Help Create the “Culture”
- ▣ We work in stressful situations
- ▣ It’s okay to be human!
- ▣ It’s okay to say “*that one got to me.*”
- ▣ Resource development
 - Creation of Peer Support Team
 - ▣ Crews “check-ins”
 - ▣ Remind crews/individual of coping tools
 - ▣ Deliver training
 - Pre-incident Education
 - Post-Incident Response
 - Additional Resources