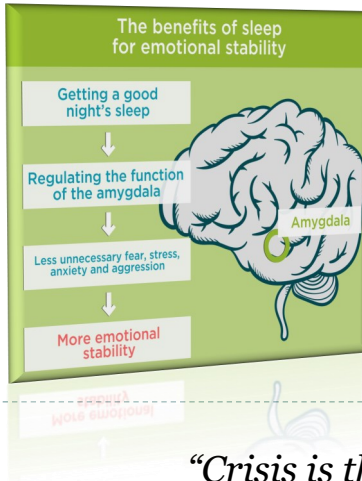


WHAT IS A STRESS REACTION?



Within the framework of Critical Incident Stress Management, a stress reaction is a physiological and psychological reaction that occurs to one who is exposed to a stressful event. Often we fail to recognize these stress reactions and may even believe that, because of our training, and experience, we are immune to them.

Everyone reacts differently to stress. However, we have found that some common stress reactions can include sleep problems, anger at the company or other departments, reluctance to fly, recurring images or replay of the event, appetite problems and other reactions.

It has also been found that most crewmembers suffering from stress reactions, who participate in some form of Critical Incident Stress Management are able to alleviate their symptoms, get back to work more quickly and avoid more debilitating long-term issues.

“Crisis is the reaction, not the event... Stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal event...”

RECOGNIZING your own stress reactions as they occur is easier said than done. Some show up immediately after an event, while others have a delayed onset. “I thought I was okay, but now I’m not. Why am I having this reaction now?” These things can pop up even if it’s been several weeks. Don’t judge yourself.

COMMON STRESS REACTIONS

Physical: Chest tightness, chills, gastrointestinal complaints, dizziness, rapid breathing and/or heart rate, nausea, sweats, sleep disturbances, thirst, visual difficulty, headaches, fatigue

Cognitive: Blaming, confusion, difficulty calculating and concentrating, difficulty making decisions, distressing dreams, hypervigilance, intrusive memories, memory problems, slower thought processes

Emotional: Abandoned, agitated, anxious, apprehension, denial, depression, fear, isolation, lost, numb, grief, guilt, anger, irritable, withdrawn, sadness, uncertainty

Behavioral: Increased risk-taking, drinking and/or drugs, antisocial, change in routine, change in sex-life, outbursts, erratic, job-changes, paranoia, relationship changes or problems, suspiciousness, withdrawal

INCREASING YOUR RESILIENCY

According to the research in stress management, the following factors impact one’s capacity for resilience in the face of trauma, loss, and uncertainty.

- 1) Mindset** Remind yourself of the many times this unwanted outcome did not occur to keep perspective on the abnormality of the event. Stay anchored in the possibility and likelihood that things will get less bad overtime.
- 2) Physical Exercise** There is a time for rigorous exercise and a time for light activity. Movement not only helps your body metabolize stress hormones more quickly but increases functional cognitive abilities as well.
- 3) Nutrition** What we eat directly impacts our human response to stress. Increasing greens, fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet will decrease the length of time stress hormones, like cortisol, stay in the body after a fight or flight response.
- 4) Rest** Sleep restores the body. Temporarily consider keeping your commitments light to make space in your daily schedule to rest and self-care.
- 5) Connection:** The support of others divides adversity and multiplies happiness. Catch yourself when you’re noticing yourself withdrawal from others and find ways to articulate your needs.
- 6) Spirituality:** Not everyone believes in something greater than themselves, but for those who do it can be an important part of their defense.

RESOURCES



BetterHelp is a mental health platform that provides remote mental health services. After completing a questionnaire you will be matched with a therapist and can schedule regular sessions from the comfort of your own home. No commitment required. **Follow my link for a 2 week trial:** <https://www.betterhelp.com/rpc/e1342319a9a7e8c6-2-11>

12 Step Programs

Are free, nonjudgmental groups that encourage growth, humility, and self-compassion. To find an anonymous meeting near you, simply search for whichever group resonates with you the most:

Codependents Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Al-Anon (families of an alcoholic), Nar-Anon (families of an addict).

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)
WWW.THEHOTLINE.ORG

With help comes hope
NATIONAL
**SUICIDE
PREVENTION**
LIFELINE™
I-800-273-TALK
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Help is available for you or someone you care about, 24-7

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOU

- ◇ Exercise (especially vigorous exercise within the first 48 hours of the traumatic event)
- ◇ Hydrate. Drinking plenty of water will help rid your body of toxins that contribute to the stress reaction
- ◇ Rest! Take naps and get more rest than usual
- ◇ Reduce or eliminate caffeine and alcohol
- ◇ Eat healthy fruits, vegetables and proteins, and on a regular schedule, even if you are not hungry
- ◇ Speak openly about the event and your reaction to it with people you trust
- ◇ If you live alone, have someone stay with you for a few days
- ◇ Don't fight recurring or intrusive thoughts or images. These are normal and will decrease with time. Notice the intensity and frequency. They should subside in a few weeks. I
- ◇ Stick to your familiar routine
- ◇ If you cannot sleep after a few days, it will help to express the emotion you're feeling. Rest is critical for recovery
- ◇ Know that you may feel rotten but be OK with that. Your body reacts physically to stress and will need time to heal itself
- ◇ NO MAJOR LIFE CHANGES! Your stress reactions should lessen over the first few days and weeks, so avoid making decisions you may regret down the road
- ◇ Make small daily decisions to regain control over your life
- ◇ In the event of an accident or incident, especially a newsworthy one, contact your family immediately and let them know that you are ok
- ◇ Prepare your family for what to expect in the event of an accident or incident, what they should do and who they should contact.
- ◇ Realize those around you, especially family, may be under stress too, so keep them informed of what is going on with you



SUPPORTING your loved one through this is fundamental to their wellbeing. It is important to know interpersonal problems are common in the weeks following an incident. Your loved one may seem more irritable, insensitive, and distant than usual. This is to be expected and a part of recovery.

Suggested Reading

Nonviolent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg

Boundaries by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Mindful Self – Compassion by Chris Germer

On Grief and Grieving by Elizabeth Kubler Ross

Broken Open by Elizabeth Lesser

INFORMATION FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- ◇ Offer your assistance. Realize that your loved one may not even know what he or she needs or wants
- ◇ Spend time with the traumatized person even if you don't say anything. Just be there
- ◇ Listen without offering advice. Don't "FIX" anything
- ◇ Don't take the person's anger or other feelings personally
- ◇ Be ready for mood swings
- ◇ Give them private time
- ◇ Go for walks together outdoors
- ◇ Help with everyday tasks
- ◇ Create a safe environment in which to share but don't attempt to force talking
- ◇ A touch or embrace may go a long way but if they don't want to be touched, don't force it
- ◇ Stay involved. Outside assistance subsides over time and they may feel isolated
- ◇ In the event of loss, grieving is required. A simple "I'm sorry this has happened to you" is enough
- ◇ Don't ignore talking about the event because you are uncomfortable. Sincere concern and asking how things are is beneficial
- ◇ Do NOT tell them "It's God's will" or "You are lucky it wasn't worse" or "You should be over this by now." These statements do harm, not help
- ◇ Do NOT tell them "I know how you feel." You probably don't
- ◇ You're there to help them. Do not take this as an opportunity to discuss your own incidents/accidents
- ◇ Avoid "curiosity questions" that distract from the main focus
- ◇ Resist telling them how they "should" feel and listen to how they "do" feel
- ◇ If you feel overwhelmed yourself, that's perfectly natural too

You don't have to go through the same traumatic experiences of another to experience growth yourself. Sometimes, the purpose for us being involved in another's suffering is to help free us from our own.

The equally painful and freeing truth is we truly are powerless over others. We can't save someone who doesn't want to save themselves. When we want something for our loved ones more than they want it for themselves, it can seem impossible to let it go and still feel like you're doing the right thing.

There is support for you. If you find that your own sense of serenity and wellbeing is shaken by your loved one's choices, you may find great wisdom in attending free group meetings such as CoDA, Al-anon, or Nar-Anon. For more information click below:

- <https://coda.org/meeting-materials/patterns-and-characteristics-2011/>
- <https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/find-an-al-anon-meeting/>
- <https://www.nar-anon.org/find-a-meeting>

DISCOUNT CODE for 10% QHHT Session
"WILLING2LEARN"



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