



Junior Officer Advisory Group

Readiness & Deployment Committee

Behavioral Health Team

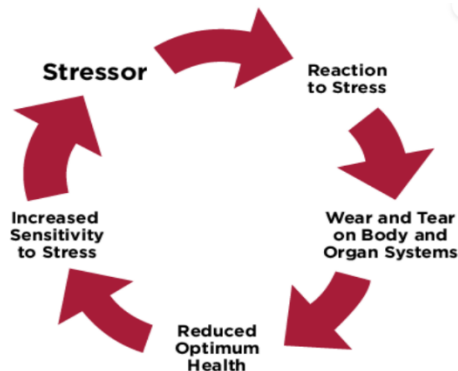
Practicing Wellness

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Stress Management

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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines stress as a natural response to a perceived challenge or threat. Physiologically, stress is a buildup of hormones in your body that create tension, strain, or pressure. Initially, stress can be a positive response, preparing a person to freeze, flee, or fight. Optimally, “positive stress” can be a positive motivational force and provide strength and clarity of thinking. The human response to stress is depicted in the cycle below:



APRIL is Stress Awareness Month

10 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

1. Familiarize yourself with signs of stress.
2. Get enough rest, exercise regularly, and maintain a healthy diet.
3. Have a life outside of your job.
4. Avoid tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and excess caffeine.
5. Draw strength from faith, friends, and family.
6. Maintain your sense of humor.
7. Have a personal preparedness plan.
8. Participate in training offered at your workplace.
9. Get a regular physical checkup.
10. Ask for help if you need it.

Suggested Individual Approaches for Stress Prevention and Management (SAMHSA)

KEY FOCUS AREA	SUGGESTIONS
Management of Workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Set task priority levels with realistic work plans. ◆ Recognize that “not having enough to do” or “waiting” is an expected part of disaster behavioral health response.
Balanced Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Eat nutritious food and stay hydrated, avoiding excess caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco. ◆ Get adequate sleep and rest, especially on longer assignments. ◆ Get physical exercise. ◆ Maintain contact and connection with primary social supports.
Stress Reduction Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduce physical tension by using familiar personal strategies (e.g., take deep breaths, gentle stretching, meditation, wash face and hands, progressive relaxation). ◆ Pace yourself between low- and high-stress activities. ◆ Use time off to decompress and “recharge batteries” (e.g., get a good meal, watch TV, exercise, read a novel, listen to music, take a bath, talk to family). ◆ Talk about emotions and reactions with fellow responders during appropriate times.
Self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress reactions. ◆ Accept that you may not be able to self-assess problematic stress reactions. ◆ Recognize that overidentification with or feeling overwhelmed by victims’ and families’ grief and trauma may signal a need for support and consultation. ◆ Understand the differences between professional helping relationships and friendships to help maintain appropriate roles and boundaries. ◆ Examine personal prejudices and cultural stereotypes. ◆ Recognize when your own experience with trauma or your personal history may interfere with effectiveness. ◆ Be aware of personal vulnerabilities and emotional reactions and the importance of team and supervisor support.

References

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). Organizational and Individual Stress Management. Retrieved from [Organizational and Individual Stress Management | SAMHSA](#)
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- The American Institute of Stress. How Stress Affects the Body. Retrieved from [How Stress Affects Your Body - The American Institute of Stress](#)