

**Stress Management:  
Special Considerations for  
Emergency Services, Rescue and  
Recovery and Health Care Personnel in  
Disaster, Mass Violence and Other  
Critical Incidents**

**Satellite Conference  
Wednesday, August 17, 2005  
2:00 - 4:00 p.m. (Central Time)**

Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
Video Communications Division

**Faculty**

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**Objectives**

- Learn the significant differences that helping professionals experience as part of their everyday exposure to highly stressful and often traumatic incidents and how their approach to stress reduction requires a unique and tailored approach.

**Objectives**

- Learn the basic physiological responses of the human body to various environmental and emotional stresses. Participants will have the ability to differentiate between normal, healthy stress, environmental stressors and emotional stressors both endogenous and reactive.

**Objectives**

- Understand the autonomic responses to various stressors and cognitive reactions that reinforce the occurrence of physical reaction without the benefit of thought processing.

**Objectives**

- Learn the ability to regulate the autonomic response to stressors with increased awareness, modeling and practice of regulatory approaches to controlling stress responses.
- Learn and practice various techniques of stress awareness regulation of stress responses and the cognitive behavioral methodology of stress management.

## Objectives

- Learn and practice various, effective, traditional breathing and progressive relaxation methods from the 3 minute to 20 minute models.
- Learn about the self-hypnotic method of stress reduction.

## Objectives

- Practice skills in developing tailored methodologies to address their unique styles of reacting to stress, mitigating its effects and avoiding the development of severe stress responses.

## The Concept of Stress Is Controversial

- It's not as simple as once thought
- Everyone perceives stress differently
- Stress is geographic and culture based

## The Physiology of Stress

### Good Stress vs. Bad Stress

- The good stress allows us to perform at a higher level (fight or flight)
  - The production of cortisol improves memory and enhances immune function.
  - Spikes in blood pressure flood our muscles and brain with oxygen

## The Physiology of Stress

- The bad stress is the overload
  - The allostatic system becomes charged too frequently with no chance to vent the build up of energy.
  - Overload of cortisol will damage memory, hurt immune system and enlarge your stomach.

## Work Stress

- Stress measured by blood pressure increases is generally twice as high during the work day compared to when at home or time off.

(Pickering, 2005)



### Work Stress

- The worst work-related stress is caused by jobs where people have little control over the activities and the rate at which they have to deal with it.



### Translation:

- When you feel helpless, that's bad
- Then you drop into a 'depressed' state and have much higher cortisol levels
- Too much cortisol causes damage
- Race is also a factor
- A high fat, high salt diet contributes (via blood pressure increased)
- Professional women with children suffer more (e.g. blood pressure doesn't go down at home)

### What Is Your Profession?

- Think about what you do for a living.
- Do you work under a time pressure in an environment you can't control?



### Environmental Effects

- Consider the disaster situation (fear, grief, pain, uncontrollable conditions)
- Consider mass violence incidents (human induced fear, safety concerns, paranoia of randomness)
- Consider terrorism (human induced terror, security, cultural paranoia)
- Add death, gruesome scenes, screams, heat/cold, water

### Automatic Responses

- Law enforcement, rescue staffs, fire personnel, emergency room and other medical personnel staffs are trained to react quickly
- Physical reactions to stressful situations can occur without the benefit of thought
- Cognitive reactions reinforce physical reactions (our thinking controls our actions)

### Automatic Responses

- Helping professionals responses are generally self sacrificing
  - many place themselves in danger
  - many will work 'till it hurts
  - many will skip breaks
  - many will ignore/fight direction to rotate assignments, go off duty or take benefit time even when encouraged

## Automatic Responses

- In emergency situations adrenaline is pumping, intensity high
- Staffs recognize the need to perform
- Physical euphoria, numbness or endorphin effect disguises distress
- Coupled with fatigue, cognition can change and create an inability to recognize poor judgment
- Anger is a common defense

## What Can You Do?

- Learn
- Regulate
- Control
- Monitor
- Think
- Practice
- Mitigate
- Change



## But I Don't Have Time!



## Start with the 333 STOP Method

STOP Where You Are  
3 Breaths  
3 Times a day  
3 Minutes

Graduate to the Relaxation Response

## Take It To The Next Level

- Self recognition-When am I stressed?
- Self awareness-What helps me?
- Self regulation-How do I 'turn it down?'
- Self control-How do I know I am OK?

## Tools

- Interrupt the automatic response
- Reduce the reaction
  - Cognitive messaging
  - Thought stopping
  - Thought insertion
- Turn down the vibration
- Return to normal
- Practice self hypnosis

## **Tools**

Try acupuncture, art, awareness, create, cook, dance, dream, draw, exercise, enjoy, explore, go home, kick-box, laugh, limit work, loosen up, listen to music, massage, meditate, practice yoga, paint, pet the pet, sing, sit quietly, start a book, stretch, talk to yourself, family and friends, wade, walk, watch a bug (or a movie), whistle, do something other than work.

## **Change the Picture**



## **Upcoming Program**

**Temporary Food Events:  
Environmental Issues Concerning  
Permits and Inspections  
Tuesday, August 23, 2005  
2:00-4:00 p.m. (Central Time)**

**For complete listing of upcoming  
programs visit: [www.adph.org/alphtn](http://www.adph.org/alphtn)**