

CISM

Basic Outline

- 1) Define Stress and Cumulative Stress
- 2) Define Critical Incidents
- 3) Define CISM, CISD
- 4) Stress Reactions [handouts], including Critical Incident Stress, Vicarious Traumatization, Burnout, and Compassion Fatigue, PTSD
- 5) Preventative CISM; Post-Stress To-Do's
 - a) Things to do/try to lessen effects
 - b) Email responses
- 6) Mention other topics
 - a) Resources—who to go to for help
 - b) “You go... We go...” Dispatching Stress
 - c) The Role of Family and Friends
 - i) How they're affected
 - ii) How they can help

Define Stress

What is stress?

Defined as

- The by-product of the transaction between a person and the environment.
- It occurs when a demand threatens to exceed an individual's capabilities and/or resources.

Reactions

- Are determined by your personal perception and attitude.

Managing stress

- Identify and deal with the threats/stressors
- Get through the threats/stressors so you're ready to deal with the challenge of the incident
- Context is everything—how you take face the incident has a lot to do with how it affects you.
- Self-Efficacy—“*I think I can...*”

Summary

- It's not always the big ones that get you. It's all the little ones wearing you down that add up to become significant.

What is Cumulative Stress?

Defined as

- The pile-up effect: the buildup of work and non-work related stressors.
 - If you feel abused day to day, you're left with no resources to deal with an incident.
- How you are is how you'll be: how you are before an incident is how you will be after a recovery period. So be well all the time and you will be able to recover better.
- Landmarks vs. Landmines
 - This event can be catastrophic (a Landmine) or it can be something you learn from (a Landmark). It's all in how you look at it.
 - 80-90% of people who endure a negative event end up more resilient and able to cope more effectively.
- Reactions are Physical, Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral
 - [See handouts]

Common Stressors

- Death of a loved one or co-worker
- Own near-death experience
- Health Problems
- Financial troubles
- Marital or Relationship troubles
- Over-Commitment
- Job-change (or promotion within an organization)
- Job hassles
- Litigation
- Lifestyle changes
- Successes
- Holidays
- Failures
- Bad calls/searches

Incident Stressors

- Amount/level of grotesqueness; body handling; location
- Proximity to event
- Feelings of helplessness on/off scene
- Organizational Conditions (poor communications, conflict, lack of support/recognition)
- Identifying with the victim or their family
- Having experienced frequent stressful events in the past
- Being exposed to events for which participants are unprepared
 - Having to deal with those participants
 - Being the one that is unprepared
- Anger/grief, self-blame ("If only..."), grief
- Previous trauma
- Performance guilt
- Status 2's, Status 3's

Critical Incident

Definition: An event that can produce serious long-term, adverse effects on an agency, its employees, or the community.

Landmarks vs. Landmines: This event can be catastrophic (a Landmine) or it can be something you learn from (a Landmark). It's all in how you look at it.

So which incidents are critical?

YOU DECIDE

Critical Incident Stress Management

Definition: A continuum of services provided by specially trained peer support and mental health support personnel dedicated to assisting public safety personnel to have healthy, happy lives and careers.

Put simply, a means to deal with critical incident stress.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Definition: A structured conversation about an event that carries an appraisal of loss or threat.

CISD in brief

- Occurs 24-72 hours after the conclusion of the incident
- Entirely confidential (like doctor/patient confidentiality)
- No notes, media or recording—as a legal maneuver
- The purpose is to help each other
- It is NOT therapy
- It is NOT an operational review
- Things you go over
 - Facts
 - Thoughts
 - Reactions
 - Challenges faced
 - Guidance—coping skills
 - Re-entry—what was learned, reaffirmation of the mission, etc.

Defusings

- An immediate response to an incident
- Talking through personal issues with the incident
- **THE BEST PLACE IS IN THE CAR ON THE WAY HOME**

Stress Reactions

- See handout for list of typical reactions.
- Not everyone will experience these reactions when faced with a 'Critical Incident.'
- What is critical to one, or even most people, may not be critical to everyone and that is *great* if you are unaffected.
- Also, what does not seem critical to most people, may be critical to a very few people, so be sensitive to that—watch out for your peers.
- Even events critical to you personally may not produce these reactions.

When Helping Hurts

Vicarious Traumatization, Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Signs and Symptoms
 - Demoralization
 - Losing sense of humor
 - Becoming hard or cynical
 - Not letting go
 - The job/clients impact on you
 - Not burnout: just need a break to rejuvenate
 - Losing sense of self or purpose
 - Losing relationship with religion
- It is possible to experience both direct and secondary traumatization
- You can't eliminate the effects of these if you're a compassionate, sympathetic person, but you can work to balance your life and be more resilient.

Vicarious Traumatization

- Your own scars revisited
- Trigger—sights, sounds, stories, related incidents
- Involves others, reawakened by you.
- Emotional Responses
 - Dread and horror
 - Shame and related emotions
 - Rage
 - Bystander (survivor) guilt
 - Grief and mourning
 - Sense of bonding
 - "Me Too."
- Contributing Factors
 - Recent or similar trauma/event
 - Not directly related to current event
 - Similarities between caregiver and victim (age, race, sex, family, profession, education, belief system)
- Physical/Emotional Fatigue
 - Perceptions are blurred/distorted
 - Emotional responses surface
- Changing perspectives
 - Survival
 - Survive, live long life
 - Thoughts of possibility of death are more common
 - Future is precarious, fate is arbitrary
 - Contributing factors
 - Constant reexposure to sudden, random, arbitrary disaster
 - Lack of nurturing resources

Burnout

- Physical symptoms
- Work performance
- Burst stress
- Occurs over time
- Grows worse until unable to function
- Emotional, physical, mental exhaustion in concert.
- Suffer physically, but inspired to work on.
- Mind shuts down before body recognizes the effects
- Physically ill before mind processes
- Declining productivity, absenteeism, personality changes, challenge authority
- Irritability, feelings of helplessness, pessimism, anxiety, carelessness, isolation, cynicism, etc.

Compassion Fatigue

- Sought to consolidate components of Burnout and Vicarious Traumatization
- a.k.a. Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Other things can be components
- Traumatic-specific, other reactions cumulative
- Symptoms parallel PTSD
- Eased by *immediate intervention*, others by lifestyle changes and work exposures
- Results when experience traumatic events through listening to a story of an event
- Coping mechanisms
 - Affirmation you CAN do something
 - Alteration get off autopilot
 - Action do it, see the changes
 - Attitude “can do” perspective

Five Steps to Less Stress

Crisis events are often beyond our ability to predict and therefore may cause us to question our sense of control. Our perspectives are called into question and the strategies we ordinarily use may be ineffective. Those strategies are based around how to deal with a *good day*. Our social support network may be disrupted or temporarily paralyzed—CISM ‘jump-starts’ the reparation process.

1. PREDICTION—The time to prepare is before the event. Be proactive.
 - a. You come back from an incident in the same shape you were in when you responded, after a reasonable amount of recovery time.
2. CONTROL—Master the situation, rather than allowing the situation to master you.
3. PERSPECTIVE—It’s all in how you look at it.
 - a. That which does not kill me makes me stronger.
 - b. “Reality is something you rise above.”—Liza Minelli
4. STRATEGIES—Rehearsed responses that have proven reliable.
 - a. What have you already used that’s helping you.
 - b. 3 Proven Strategies
 - i. Distancing
 1. don’t take on others’ burdens
 - ii. Boundaries
 1. My life—Your life—definite boundary between
 - iii. Reframing
 1. Focus on what you did that made a difference, rather than making the tragedy personal.
5. SOCIAL SUPPORT—“I get by with a little help from my friends.”
 - a. Emotional Support
 - i. someone who cares
 - ii. “Who can I call for you?”—family, friends, etc.
 - b. Appraisal
 - i. “How am I doing compared to the other people who’ve gone through this too?”
 - c. Instrumental Support
 - i. Information and resources available.
 - ii. Sometimes a hug is about the last thing you need.

So how do we juggle it all?

Theory:

The *file cabinet* syndrome. Tuck it all away to have it haunt you some other day.

Is there hope?

- Recognize your limitations
- Inoculate yourself through education
- Know who your support folks are
- Competency through training
- Have fun! Life is too short.
- **Take care of yourself**—preplanning for sanity's sake
 - Exercise
 - Eat right
 - Outside interests
 - External support group as well as the internal group
 - Cherish family and friends
 - Try to purge those old files

Vocabulary of Strength—How to Survive

- Insight Provides clarity
- Independence Provides safety
- Relationships Provides connectedness
- Initiative Provides a sense of competence
- Creativity Provides beauty
- Humor Provides liveliness
- Morality Provides goodness

Critical Incident Stress "In a Nutshell"

1. Major events challenge us
2. Successful response strengthens us
3. Working through distress is part of the process of growing stronger