

Managing Stress

1. Caffeine– Decrease it!
2. Nutrition– Balance it!
3. Exercise– Do it!
4. Sleep– Increase it!
5. Time Outs– 20 minutes NOW!
6. Leisure– Enjoy it!
7. Expectations-Be realistic!
8. Perceptions– Reframe it!
9. Ventilation-Talk about it!
10. Humor-Laugh about it!

Managing stress is an art form. Especially so for disaster response work. You must actively implement and practice those activities that help **YOU!**



“No one who responds to a disaster or mass casualty event is untouched by it.”

In the Field Self Care

Family: Self care actually starts with your family. Know that your family is safe and out of harm’s way. **DO THIS FIRST!**

Dress: This is hard dangerous work, dress accordingly.

- Strong and comfortable shoes. Extra Socks.
- Layer for Colorado Weather.
- Hat, Sunglasses, Sun Block (SPF 45)

Personal: Water & Protein/Whole grain Bars

- Take frequent breaks
- Talk frequently with others about the event.
- Work with a buddy to monitor other’s stress
- Flashlight & small radio (AM/FM or NOVA)
- Cell Phone (In many mountainous areas, cell phones do no work.)
- Note Pad and Pen

Post Disaster: Maintain your normal routine.

- ♦ Remain part of the community, attend memorials

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**Disaster Response
Workers: Self-Care
Tips**

The Effects of Disaster Response

Following each of the major traumatic events in the United States over the past several years, disaster responders have found themselves reacting in many of the same ways as the primary survivors of the event. Some of the subsequent problems they have experienced include increased alcohol and drug use, increased sick time, changes in profession, burnout or increased domestic violence.

Most disaster responders have many protective factors in their lives. Strong social supports, training, and active lifestyles are all positive protective factors. Yet they forget some primary issues around disaster response. They try to avoid or deny their own difficulties.

Several assumptions are important to acknowledge in this work:

1. No one who responds to a disaster or mass casualty event is untouched by it.
2. Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
3. *We All have Limitations!*



Normal Reactions

Many of the responders working the Oklahoma City bombing, the shootings at Columbine High School and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 would work 18-36 hour days, overriding signs of stress and fatigue. They found themselves caught in the “fight” response for the victims (think fight/flight/freeze/faint). Many denied that they themselves needed rest or recovery time.



It is, however, extremely important that as a disaster responder that you care for yourself as well. Should you find yourself recognizing any of the following reactions in yourself or others, take action to support self-care and recovery.

- ◆ Difficulty communicating thoughts
- ◆ Difficulty remembering instructions
- ◆ Difficulty maintaining balance or unusual clumsiness
- ◆ Uncharacteristically argumentative
- ◆ Difficulty making decisions
- ◆ Short attention span
- ◆ Risk-taking behaviors

- ◆ Tremors/headaches/nausea
- ◆ Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- ◆ Easily frustrated
- ◆ Difficulty problem-solving
- ◆ Refusal to follow orders
- ◆ Refusal to leave the scene

Immediate Self Care Actions

If any of the above signs begin showing up, it is time to take action.

1. Take Action: Get yourself out of there. Someone else can do the job you’re doing. Either:
 - A. Take a lower stress work rotation, or return to a more routine work environment.
 - B. Go home. Connect with the people you love and who love you.
2. Engage in the stress reducing techniques on the back panel of this brochure.
3. Seek out employee assistance programs available to you through your employer.

Remember it is now a disaster, not an emergency. Pace yourself for a marathon.

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