

PROMOTING RESILIENCY WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY PERSONNEL

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SESSION GOALS

To define psychological resiliency and identify relevant factors for these unique employee populations

To describe Law Enforcement (LE) and U.S. Intelligence Community (USIC) cultural factors & norms that might affect receptivity to psychosocial support

To share substantive resiliency-building information & strategies for use in various training and awareness efforts

WHAT IS RESILIENCY?

From Dictionary.com:

1. the power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched; elasticity.
2. ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like; buoyancy.

For LE and USIC personnel, the ability to “bounce back” in light of sometimes physically/psychologically perilous assignments or locations.

WHAT DETERMINES RESILIENCY?

Hereditary & biological factors
including health, temperament

Significant life experiences

**Material resources and social
environment**

Learned coping methods

Cognitive factors including:

- “Mental set” including scripts and lenses
- Judgment and decision-making
- Attributional style – internal vs. external, stable vs. unstable, global vs. specific (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978)
- Cognitive rigidity or flexibility
- Insight and self-awareness...

CULTURAL FACTORS AND NORMS

Through a combination of temperament, inherent/socialized mental toughness, and sheer necessity, those we serve might tend to be *too well-adapted for their own good*.

- ❖ continuing to plough through despite being stressed, exhausted, or traumatized
- ❖ maybe appearing fine, still effective & efficient, but...
- ❖ possibly paying a price with physical & emotional health, family needs, and overall quality of life.

SOCIAL & INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Facets of “hypermasculine socialization” (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988) possibly affecting personnel regardless of gender identification:

- *expected to be impervious to pain & fear*
- *not supposed to have any needs*
- *contempt for any perceived weakness in self or others*

And: Powerful reinforcements for over-functioning, relentless self-sacrifice, neglect of physical/emotional health, always subsuming personal needs to a larger mission that never ends....

MAINTAINING RESILIENCY

Cognitive Strategies

Getting clear about what you can & can't control and take responsibility for

Remembering not to take certain things personally

Talking to others within & beyond your work group to keep a sense of perspective

Being selective about where to put your energy and resources

At times, deciding to “constructively detach” while still doing what you need to do

Periodically re-assessing your needs & priorities in relation to your job and career.

MAINTAINING RESILIENCY

Self-Care Discussion Questions:

- What is your BEST EXCUSE for not taking care of yourself?
- Are some people “too well adapted” for their own good?
- Can it be selfish to neglect yourself?
- What are some unique challenges of balancing your needs with everyone else's, in relation to risky or demanding operational work?

Remember that committed self-care lets you come from a position of strength!

MAINTAINING RESILIENCY

Emotional Self-Awareness Discussion Questions

Think about a uniquely stressful time or situation you have been through, and consider the following questions:

How were you affected (physically, mentally, socially, etc.) in this period?

Did you recognize it at the time?

Did you make needed adjustments or get yourself extra support?

If not, why not?

HELPING PROFESSIONALS: DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR POSITIVE IMPACT!

- The existence of designated support programs has protective value – demonstrating that the organization has employees' backs
- Receptivity to help often increases with more experience + opportunity to observe the impact of high-intensity assignments on self and others

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. – Maya Angelou